

For Advanced Idiots: Opening Weak Two Bids and Responses

Chapter 24

In This Chapter

- When you may open a hand that doesn't meet the requirements for opening at the 1 level
- Requirements for opening a Weak Two bid
- Opening a Weak Two in first and second seat versus third and fourth seat
- Requirements for opening a Strong Two Clubs bid

It used to be that if you opened a suit at the 2 level you were showing a huge hand. As discussed in Chapter 8, there is a better way to show your strong hands: You can open them with 2 Clubs, which gives your partnership more room to bid.

If you use a 2 Club opening bid to show all of your big hands (this includes big balanced hands and strong hands with long suits and good distribution), even those that contain major suits with five or more cards, you now have your other opening 2-level bids available for something else. It took a while to figure out the best treatment, but with time one became available and has become popular with almost everyone. Curiously, it is the exact opposite of Strong Two bids. The replacement is Weak Two bids.

What Is a Weak Two Bid?

A Weak Two bid is a 2 bid in Diamonds, Hearts, or Spades, in which you promise exactly six cards in the suit. There are different HCP requirements, depending on your vulnerability:

- **Not vulnerable:** 6 to 10 HCP
- **Vulnerable:** 7 to 11 HCP

Weak Two Bids in First or Second Seat

The following list details the values required to make a Weak Two opening bid in the first or second seat.



ALERT

In first or second seats, your Weak Two bids must follow these guidelines. The reason is that your partner is not a passed hand. If your partner has a good hand and chooses to bid, she must be able to count on you to have certain values.

- **A six-card suit.**
- **A good suit.** Some players say you need three of the top five honors, others say that virtually any six cards headed by the Ace, King, or Queen is okay. Others take a middle ground. Experts generally suggest that you bid aggressively.
- **No side four-card major.** You may miss a good major suit fit if you have four cards in a major.
- **No side five-card minor.** Your wild distribution will be too big a surprise for your partner to judge the hands well.
- **No void.** If you have a void, it means that you have good trump support for other suits. It may be that another suit would be a better trump suit.
- **No seven-card suit.** Your seventh card will be unexpected, and this extra card will cloud your partner's judgment.



ALERT

If you make a Weak Two bid, even if it's a little less than classic, your partner will have a better idea of what your side can make than either of the opponents. Because it's harder to bid against preempts, you have a lot to gain when you open a Weak Two bid and not that much to lose. Winners preempt a lot. Be a preemptor.

Bidding Weak Two When You're Not Vulnerable

Consider the following: You're in first or second seat and not vulnerable. You get to open the bidding if you want. Remember that a Weak Two bid not vulnerable shows 6 to 10 high-card points. How would you play the following hands?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. ♠ QJ9843
♥ K3
♦ K2
♣ 873 | 2. ♠ KT7632
♥ Q8
♦ Q8
♣ J63 | 3. ♠ AQJ874
♥ J983
♦ 73
♣ 3 | 4. ♠ KJ9732
♥ 32
♦ A762
♣ 8 |
| 5. ♠ 73
♥ KQT8763
♦ Q84
♣ 6 | 6. ♠ 7
♥ AQT984
♦ 8743
♣ 94 | | |

Hand 1: 2 Spades. When you bid a Weak Two, your partner learns you have a six-card suit and 5 to 10 points. The points you have are nice quality, and your Spade suit, even though missing the Ace and King, is nice. All you need from your partner is two Spades, or perhaps even just the Ten of Spades, to make this a playable trump suit. That isn't asking for too much. Keep in mind that if you pass and later bid Spades, your partner will not know you have six of them. She will suspect that you have five. Further, by passing first, you give the opponents room to do some cheap bidding.

Hand 2: Pass. You have poor Spade spots and, importantly, you have high cards on the side that may be useless if you are Declarer in Spades.

Hand 3: Pass. This has a perfect Spade suit for a Weak Two bid, and it has the right number of points, but it has four Hearts. That is a serious warning sign.

Hand 4: 2 Spades. All of its points are working and it has nice distribution.

Hand 5: 3 Hearts. This is not a 2 Heart opening bid. Don't make a Weak Two bid with a seven-card suit. When you're playing Weak Twos, a 3-level opening bid promises a 7-card suit.

Hand 6: 2 Hearts. This is a rare 6-point Weak Two. When you make a Weak Two on a minimum hand, be sure you have all of your points in the trump suit.

Bidding Weak Two When You're Vulnerable

Consider the following situation: You are in first or second seat, vulnerable. You get to open the bidding if you wish. Remember that a Weak Two bid vulnerable shows 7 to 11 HCP. How would you play the following hands?

- | | | | |
|----------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| 1. ♠ 74 | 2. ♠ AJT864 | 3. ♠ KJ8753 | 4. ♠ 82 |
| ♥ KQJ874 | ♥ 2 | ♥ K42 | ♥ 83 |
| ♦ Q8 | ♦ KT5 | ♦ 42 | ♦ AKJ876 |
| ♣ K32 | ♣ K52 | ♣ 82 | ♣ 83 |

Hand 1: 2 Hearts. This is a maximum Weak Two bid. Note, however, that the quality of the eleven HCP isn't that good. The Queen of Diamonds is suspect because it's a doubleton, so it doesn't indicate trick-taking capability unless your partner has the Ace or King or Jack fourth. If not, you could have two immediate Diamond losers and no winners.

Hand 2: 1 Spade. When you have a really nice 11 HCP plus good distribution and a fine six-card suit, your hand is really worth close to 13 points because of your singleton. Open with a 1 bid.

Hand 3: Pass. This is tempting, but because you're vulnerable, it's okay to be cautious. If you were not vulnerable, you'd open this in 2 Spades in a flash.

Hand 4: 2 Diamonds. You have close to a minimum in terms of HCP but your suit is outstanding. Note that if you pass you may not get to bid your Diamonds later.



TRICKS OF THE TRADE

High cards that have no obvious value such as Qx or Jxx are called *soft points* or *bad points*. When you preempt, you want to have as few bad points as possible. You would rather have six good points than four good points and four bad points.

Weak Two Bids in Third Seat

In third seat, you're in a different situation. Your partner has passed, so you know that she doesn't have an opening hand. If you have a weak hand yourself, you can count on your LHO being ready to bid something. In third seat, it is a proven strategy to open aggressive Weak Two bids.

Weak Two Bids in Fourth Seat

This is an odd situation. If the bidding is passed to you in fourth seat, you don't really have a reason to open a weak hand. You can pass it out and avoid getting a negative score. If you do open with a 2 bid other than clubs, the hand you show is dramatically different. Instead of being weak, your 2 bid is descriptive, saying that you have a six-card suit and about 11 to 15 points. The reason for this is that you get to describe your hand exactly while at the same time making it hard for the opponents to have second thoughts. One example of a fourth seat 2 bid is as follows:

♠ 83
♥ KQJ984
♦ KJ4
♣ QJ

This hand has 13 HCP, but they aren't terribly good ones. If you open 1 Heart, you give opponents bidding space to find a fit in another suit. By opening 2 Hearts, you tell your partner exactly what you have and at the same time you suppress the opponents' bidding. The key to this bid is that you tell your partner two things. First, you tell her that you have an opening hand. Second, you tell her that you have a six-card suit. This is important information, something she wouldn't know if you opened it at the one level. The fact that you're opening in fourth seat gives you the opportunity to convey this information to your partner in just one bid.

Responding to Weak Two Bids

Responding to Partner's opening with a Weak Two bid is totally different from responding to her opening with a 1 bid. Here are some rules that will get you off to a good start; you can respond to a Weak Two bid ...

- **If you, as responder, bid a new suit.** If you bid a new suit, it is a forcing bid. You tend to deny support for your partner's suit and you show enough points that you hope for a game. This means you need around 15 HCP and a good suit.
- **If you have a fit and enough for game.** Bid game if you have game points. Keep in mind that your partner has a six-card suit. You can raise to four of partner's major with only two-card support.
- **If you have a fit and you think you have enough for slam.**
- **If your hand is invitational.** If you are not sure whether you have enough for game and want to find out more about your partner's hand, you can bid 2 No Trump to ask the opener for more information. A two no trump bid can ask opener for different information, depending on the agreement of the partnership, but this is the simplest. You are asking your partner to bid an Ace or a King, called a *feature*, in a suit outside the trump suit, if she has it, regardless of what else she has in that suit. So if she has opened 2 Hearts in Hand 1 above, and you bid 2 No Trump, she would respond 3 Clubs, showing she had the King of Clubs. If she has no outside Ace or King, she rebids her opening suit.

- **If you know your side doesn't have a game.** In this case, you usually pass. If you have support for your partner, however, you can raise to the 3 level if you have three- or four-card support. In fact, if you have four-card support and two doubletons or four-card support and a singleton and not much else, it's wise to bid game in the expectation that the opponents may have a contract of their own. The reason for this is that if you don't have much, you're just cooperating with partner's preempt by squeezing your opponents further and giving them less room in which to communicate. If your partner opens 2 Spades and you raise to 3 Spades, opponents must start communicating at the 4 level.

Consider the following hand: Your partner opens 2 Hearts with no one vulnerable. She has 6 to 10 points. With these hands, what do you respond?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. ♠ QJ873
♥ K
♦ KQJ
♣ K878 | 2. ♠ A84
♥ J83
♦ Q8762
♣ 72 | 3. ♠ QJ3
♥ 8
♦ AKQJ872
♣ AJ | 4. ♠ 8
♥ Q873
♦ KT987
♣ 873 |
| 5. ♠ AK3
♥ T3
♦ AT87
♣ KJ64 | 6. ♠ AQJ986
♥ 3
♦ 8
♣ JT875 | | |

Hand 1: Pass. You have 15 points, but they are poor-quality points. You have only one Heart, so the hands are something of a misfit. Best is if you pass smoothly. Perhaps the next opponent will decide to bid something. You would like it if he bid Spades.



TRICKS OF THE TRADE

One of the very best things you can do at the table is to exude confidence. You don't have to know what you're doing, but if you can manage to act confidently about your bids and plays, your opponents will be impressed, and that will affect their play. This is analogous to putting on a poker face.

Hand 2: 3 Hearts. The idea is that you're making the bidding a little more difficult for the opponents.

Hand 3: 3 No Trump. You don't want to play in Hearts but you would like to take a chance on game. Bid 3 No Trump without showing diamonds and without asking questions with 2 No Trump.

Hand 4: 4 Hearts. You won't make it, but you won't be down a lot either. The idea is that you're making life very tough for the player on your left. Clearly opponents have the bulk of the points. Your partner has less than 12 and you only have 5; that means that opponents have a minimum of 24 points between them, and if Partner only has the minimum, 5 points, then they have 30 points between them. Clearly, it should be their hand to play. By jumping to 4 Hearts, you make it very difficult for them to find their fit.

Hand 5: 2 No Trump. You have a good hand that's not quite good enough to bid game. Bid 2 No Trump and find out whether your partner has the King of Diamonds or the Ace of Clubs. If so, you should bid 4 Hearts knowing that her six Hearts and your two Hearts are fine for game. If not, pass her 3 Hearts rebid.

Hand 6: Pass. 2 Spades would be forcing. You need around 15 good points to bid a new suit. Your partner, remember, may not pass your bid. It is forcing, and she will always bid again, compounding your problems if you have bid with a weak hand.

Strong Two Clubs Bid

Because the modern trend is to use an opening bid at the 2 level as weak, a bid at a reasonable level was needed to show a very strong hand—stronger than 1 No Trump and 2 No Trump. So the 2 Clubs opening bid was reserved for a strong hand.

Requirements for a Strong Two Clubs Open

The requirements for a hand to open 2 Clubs are as follows:

- 22 or more HCP; or
- 8½ tricks

So a Strong 2 Clubs bid either shows a lot of points, or an unbalanced hand with enough trick-taking capability that you're assured of taking more than eight tricks in your own hand. Look at the following hands—all of these hands qualify for an opening bid of 2 Clubs:

1. ♠ AK74 ♥ KQJ6 ♦ AK ♣ QJ6	2. ♠ AKQJ643 ♥ AK ♦ Q43 ♣ 3	3. ♠ Q8653 ♥ AKQJ ♦ AKQJ ♣ void	4. ♠ AK ♥ 65 ♦ KQJ2 ♣ AKQJ
--------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	-------------------------------------

Hand 1: Contains 23 HCP and is balanced.

Hand 2: Contains only 19 HCP, 21 total points; if Spades is trump, however, you have nine tricks in your hand, so that qualifies.

Hand 3: Contains 22 HCP and 3 distribution points.

Hand 4: Contains 23 HCP, 24 total points. Regardless of the terrible Hearts, this is a 23-HCP hand and must be opened 2 Clubs.

The 2 Clubs open is an *artificial* bid. That means that it says nothing about the suit bid, Clubs. So you can open all four hands 2 Clubs, even though Hand 2 only has one Club and Hand 3 is void of Clubs.

Responses to Strong Two Club Opening

Unless you have a strong five-card major, or a balanced hand with 7 or more points, you *must* bid 2 Diamonds when your partner opens 2 Clubs. This is called a waiting bid. It's conventional, in that it says nothing about Diamonds. You must bid 2 Diamonds even if you're void in Diamonds. All it says to your partner is, "Okay, partner, I hear you. You have 22+ points or eight-and-a-half tricks in your hand. Tell me more."

You must remember two other rules when you're responding to your partner's opening bid of 2 Clubs:

- When your partner opens 2 Clubs, you're required to keep the bidding open to either 2 No Trump or until she bids one of her suits for the second time. So even if you have a Yarborough, you must keep bidding if your partner opens 2 Clubs, until she either gets to 2 No Trump or bids one of her suits a second time.
- Whenever your partner bids a new suit, you must bid again. Bidding a new suit by your partner who has opened 2 Clubs is *forcing for one round* on responder. Of course, if your RHO interferes and bids before you, you need not bid. Your Pass will tell her something about your hand.

This is true regardless of the weakness of your hand.

What is your partner telling you when she bids 2 Clubs?

Don't pass! That's the main thing she's telling you. There's a famous story about the police being called to a Bridge club to find a player dead, shot through the heart. The police asked what happened and one of the players responded, "The deceased's partner opened 2 Clubs and the bidding went Pass, Pass, Pass, Bang! Bang! Bang!" Don't let this happen to you. If you pass a Strong Two Club opening, you had better have a bodyguard available when the hand's over. If not, you could be shot through the heart; if there are any Bridge players on the jury, your partner will probably get off with justifiable homicide.

Your partner is telling you she has a huge hand and she's not just interested in game, she's interested in slam if you have any kind of support at all.

Another thing she's telling you by her bid is that you should bid slowly and communicate. There's absolutely no reason for you to give some kind of a jump response telling her about your hand. You have time. Although the 2 Clubs opening crowds the bidding a little, you haven't given up much space, and you still have a lot of time to talk to each other.

So just be patient. Use the system you've agreed on to describe your hands to each other.



BRIDGEBIT

What you're learning in this book is the most standard system used by players. It's the one I use. But there are a lot of different systems that require different responses to an opening of 2 Clubs. Although you might be aware of them, you shouldn't concern yourself too much with what they are because the system you're learning works just fine.

Weak Responses with a Cheaper Minor

So how do you tell your partner that your hand stinks? What if you have a Yarborough? How can you tell her if you're required to bid?

The answer to this question is that, at your next bid, if you bid the cheaper minor available to you at the 3 level, it tells her that your hand has 3 points or less in it.

So if she opens 2 Clubs and you respond 2 Diamonds, and she bids 2 Spades, what do you think you bid to show her a terrible hand?

Answer. Your bid is 3 Clubs (artificial). That's the *cheaper minor*—that is, the lowest minor suit you can bid at that point.

Rules for responding with cheaper minor are as follows:

Partner's First Rebid	Your Response
2 Hearts or 2 Spades	3 Clubs
2 No Trump	Pass
3 Clubs	3 Diamonds
3 Diamonds	3 No Trump

All of these responses show a bad hand with no more than 3 points.

This is the basic, standard way to show a weak hand. There are alternatives. Some people play responder shows a weak hand by bidding 2 No Trump. Others play that the response to show a weak hand after partner's first rebid is 3 Diamonds is to bid 3 Hearts, the cheapest suit available. I recommend you start playing it the way shown above. As you become more advanced, you may want to change. For the record, the way I'm teaching it is still the way I play.

Positive Responses Besides 2 Diamonds

You don't absolutely, positively *have* to bid 2 Diamonds in response to your partner's Strong Two Clubs opening. There are times when you have something, too, and you want to let her know about it as soon as possible. The following are allowed responses:

- **2 of a major or 3 of a minor.** This shows you with a good five-card suit or a six-card suit and at least 6 HCP. A *good* five-card suit should be one headed by two of the top three honors, or three of the top five honors. Don't forget that your partner is the one with the big hand. She probably has a suit she wants to promote. So you don't want to tell her that you have the suit in which you should be playing unless it's a very good suit. A five-card suit headed by the King-Jack, for instance, just isn't good enough.
- **2 No Trump.** This shows at least 7 HCP and denies a four-card major with no voids, singletons, and not more than two doubletons.
- **Jump to 3 of a major.** This shows at least a six-card suit with three of the top four honors.

Bidding When Opponents Open a Weak Two Bid or Higher Preempt

When your RHO opens a Weak Two bid, you will often have the urge to bid something. Certain care has to be taken when bidding against a preempt because it is forcing you to bid at a high level, and at the same time it is warning you that there could be some bad distribution to contend with.

Here are some general guidelines:

- If you're thinking of making a takeout double, you need support for the unbid suits and at least the following:
 - 12 HCP if you're doubling a Weak Two bid.
 - 14 HCP if you're doubling a Weak 3 bid.
 - 16 HCP if you're doubling an opening 4 bid. Note that a double of a 4-level preempt can be played as penalty or takeout, depending on partnership agreement.

A better way to play a double of an opening 4 bid in a major suit is that a double of 4 Hearts is takeout while a double of 4 spades is penalty. If you play this way, if you want to make a takeout bid over the 4 spade opener, you bid 4 No Trump. That asks your partner to bid her longest suit.)

- If you are thinking of overcalling in a suit, you need a good suit in all cases. Following are point requirements for bidding at the various levels, in addition to having at least five cards in the suit:

- **2 level.** 13 good-quality HCP
- **3 level.** 15 good-quality HCP
- **4 level.** 17 good-quality HCP, and usually a six-card suit



BRIDGEBIT

The more you play Bridge, the more you will hate bidding against preempts. There is something to be learned from this. If you hate bidding when an opponent preempts, think about how much fun your opponents are having when you are the preemptor. Hint: Preempt as often as you dare.

All No Trump overcalls at the 2 or 3 level against a preempt are natural. If they open a Weak Two bid and you bid 2 No Trump, you are showing 15 to 18 HCP with a stopper in their suit. This is *not* an unusual No Trump overcall. With 19 or more balanced points, you usually bid 3 No Trump, although a double first is fine if you have good distribution for it. If they open with a 3-level preempt, you can bid 3 No Trump with a variety of hands. Typically you have at least 16 HCP. This is not always a safe bid, but they have made life difficult for you and the only way to get what you deserve is to take an occasional risk. However, if you do this, you should have at least one stopper in their suit, preferably two.

Balancing When Opponents Open a Weak Two Bid or Higher Preempt

If your LHO opened the Weak Two and the bidding is passed around to you, you can be aggressive to the extent that you need 2 fewer points for your bid. Previously I suggested that you can double a Weak Two bid with 13 HCP and proper distribution. If a Weak Two is passed around to you, it is acceptable to double with 2 fewer points, 11 in this case, as long as you have support for the missing suits. You can deduct 2 points for the requirements for balancing at the 3 and 4 levels as well (13 HCP for the 3 level and 15 HCP for the 4 level). Be careful that you do not deduct more, though. If you get in the habit of being aggressive on the theory that the opponents are showing a weak hand, you will be caught speeding now and then and there will be a stiff price to pay.

When you make a balancing double with a weak hand, it is essential that you have support for all three unbid suits. If you do it with a doubleton in an unbid suit, your partner could find herself playing in a 4-2 fit, and she won't be happy.

The Least You Need to Know

- Weak Two bids can be made in Diamonds, Hearts, or Spades in suits that contain six cards, 5 to 10 HCP, and two of the top three honors.
- In first or second seat, you shouldn't have a side four-card major, or a side five-card minor, or a void.
- A response of 2 No Trump to a Weak Two opening asks for a feature in an outside suit, either an Ace, King, or a QJx.
- 2 Clubs is a strong artificial opening bid promising 22+ points or 8½ tricks.
- A 2 Clubs opening is forcing to 2 No Trump or until the opener bids one of her suits for the second time. You must bid if your opponents have not intervened.
- A response of 2 Diamonds is a waiting bid in response to a Strong Two Clubs opening, saying nothing about the Diamond suit.