

BRIDGE – BEGINNER’S LESSONS I - 9

Higher Level Opening Bids – (WEAK & STRONG)

1. A Strong, Artificial and Forcing Opening Two-Bid (“2C”)

- I An opening bid of “2C” is called a demand two-bid. It is strong, artificial, and forcing. It promises 21 or more high-card points, (4-Losers or fewer), and is either balanced or unbalanced with respect to its distribution.
2. Since Opener holds either game-in-hand, else no fewer than one trick short of game, such bids force Opener’s Partner to continue to respond until at least the bidding level arrives at *one trick shy of game*; i.e., **2-NT**, **3H**, **3S**, **4C**, or **4D**, even if responding Partner holds a worthless hand.
3. Five systems of responses exist in reaction to a strong, artificial and forcing opening “2C” bid. They are “*Standard*”, “*2-D Waiting*”, “*Roth*,” “*Jacoby Steps*”, and “*Controls*”. They all, by means of varying methods, provide the Opener with information as to Responder’s HCP strength and distribution, and/or the presence or absence of any Aces and Kings (“*Controls*”), all of which become necessary for the opening Bidder to place the final contract with respect to both level and denomination..

2. Pre-emptive Opening Bids

1. An opening bid of **2D**, **2H**, **2S**, or higher, is called a pre-emptive bid. These bids are natural in that the suit that is bid predominates (six cards or more). Such bids suggest a weak hand (fewer HCP’s than opening count), and by Partnership agreement, either a relatively strong suit, “*structured*” or “*disciplined*,” (defined as two of the top three or three of the top five honors); else a weaker suit “*unstructured*” or “*undisciplined*,” (fewer top honors).
2. The point-count strength of preemptive bids is customarily 5-11 high-card points with any 6-card suit, if bid at the 2-level; and with 8-11 high-card points, and typically longer suits, if bid at the 3-level or higher.
3. Since the pre-emptor fully describes his/her hand in one bid, the responding Partner always assumes charge of any subsequent auction; i.e., becomes the “**Captain**.” The pre-emptor promises *never* to bid again, unless the Responder forces him/her to do so. A new suit below the level of game, or an artificial “**2-NT**” bid by Responder are the only two forcing bids available to the Responder. Any raise in Opener’s suit is *non-forcing* (“**RONF**”) (**R**aise is the **O**nly **N**on-**F**orce); i.e., all others are forcing.

Responding To Partner's Opening "2C" Bid

With most Partnerships, today, a "2C" opening bid is the only strong opening 2-Bid other than 2-NT. All other opening 2-Bids (2D, 2H, or 2S) are weak and preemptive. These preemptive calls usually show 5-11 HCP's and a 6-card or longer suit. The qualification for a "2C" opening bid, however, are that one must hold a very strong hand, exemplified by 21 or more HCP's, no more than 4 Losing tricks (the equivalent of near-game in one's own hand), and/or the number of quick tricks equal to, or greater than, the number of losing tricks held. The "2C" opening bid is strong, artificially conventional, and is forcing to any one of three levels: 2-NT, 3- of either Major suit, or 4- of either Minor suit; i.e., one trick short of game in each instance. **Responder is obligated to keep the bidding open, at least until one of these three, previously-mentioned levels has been reached, and may not "Pass" until then.** The five (5) most common methods of responding to Partner's opening strong, artificial and forcing "2C" bid are as follows:

Standard

Waiting

Roth

Jacoby Steps

Controls

The easiest to learn from amongst the five, especially for Beginner Players is "**Jacoby Steps.**"

Jacoby Step Responses

This system of responses to Partner's strong, artificial, and forcing, opening bid of "2C," uses a series of artificial step responses giving Opener an exact HCP (High-Card Point) count evidencing the exact strength of Responder's hand. With Aces = 4, Kings = 3, Queens = 2 and Jacks = 1, as follows:

- a. "2D" = 0-3 HCP's
- b. "2H" = 4-6 HCP's
- c. "2S" = 7-9 HCP's
- d. "2-NT" = 10-12 HCP's
- e. "3C" = 13-15 HCP's; etc., etc.

FOR BEGINNERS' LESSON TEN

HIGHER-LEVEL OPENING BIDS

(USED WITH STRONG 2's)

- A. Following a review of the previous lesson, explain that opening bids at the 2- and 3-level (or higher) are basically “novelty” items, since they do not occur very often. Thus, your survey of these bids should be rather general just to complete your students’ overall picture of the game.
- B. Introduce the class to demand two-bids.
1. Explain why opening two of a suit is called a demand bid. The demand of course is that Partner is not only forced to respond but is forced to carry onto one trick short of game as well.
 2. When playing all strong opening 2's, all 2-level opening bids promise 21 or more points (or its equivalent), at least five cards in the suit bid, and the potential for nine or more total tricks. Subsequent bids by the Opener simply describe the shape of the hand and continue the obligation for the Responder to keep the auction going until the minimum bid level is reached.
 3. 2-NT by the Opener is *not* a demand bid, rather, it is limited to 21-22 high-card points, and the Responder is allowed to “*Pass*” with a “bust” hand.
 4. The Responder uses a conventional or artificial bid to describe a weak hand. **2-NT** is the negative response over strong 2's, showing 0-7 points (“**2D**” is the equivalent, weak, artificial bid over a strong, artificial and forcing “2C” opening). It does *not* promise a balanced hand. Any other bid is a positive response, generally suggesting the possibility of a Slam-level contract.
- C. Pre-emptive opening bids frequently mystify beginners, because they are reluctant to proceed to a high level with a weak hand. You will need to describe these bids with care. * This is only intended to be an introduction, so keep the conditions simple. The Rule of Two and Three, for example, is probably too much for your students to fathom, since they will have only a crude knowledge of scoring.

(USED WITH STRONG 2's)

1. Explain the basic conditions for a 3-level pre-empt:
 - a) An excellent quality 7-card or longer suit, usually headed by the Ace or the King.
 - b) 6-10 (maybe a bad 11) high-card points.
 - c) Most of the points in the long suit.
2. Explain the dual purpose of a pre-empt bid:
 - a) To describe a hand that has very limited value, unless the long suit is the trump suit.
 - b) To deprive the Opponents of room to bid their hands conveniently.
3. Explain why a pre-emptive opening bid is really quite safe:
 - a) If Partner has a very poor hand, the 3-bid will fail by a few tricks, but the Opponents, holding most of the points, will surely have missed at least a game contract of their own.
 - b) With an average hand, say, 11-12 high-card points, Partner's values will certainly make the 3-bid a reasonable contract to play.
 - c) With a terrific hand Partner will know how high to bid in support of the long suit.
4. Briefly, discuss the role of the Responder as the Partner in charge of the subsequent auction. While you will not have enough time to describe the responses in detail, be sure to stress that the pre-emptor does not bid again unless forced by the Responder. A New Suit bid by Responder below the level of game, or a bid of "2-NT" both create such a force. ("RONF") ("Raise is the Only Non-Force).
5. Finally, you might introduce the notion of pre-emptive bids at the four and five-level, too. For the sake of simplicity you can suggest the following generalization: the higher the pre-empt bid, the longer the suit.

PRACTICE HANDS FOR THE FOLLOW-UP SESSION
BEGINNERS' LESSON TEN

HAND 15

| | | | |
|------|-------|-------|------------------------|
| | 432 | | |
| | 432 | | |
| | K432 | | |
| | 432 | | |
| 87 | | A65 | Dealer: North |
| 765 | | KJT98 | Declarer: South |
| QJT9 | | 876 | Contract: 4S |
| AT98 | | 76 | Lead: DQ |
| | KQJT9 | | |
| | AQ | | |
| | A5 | | |
| | KQJ5 | | |

a) The recommended auction is:

P — P — "2C" — P
 "2D" — P — 2S — P
 4S

Explain all bids, especially "2D" (negative response) and 4S (a fast arrival to game is weaker than a slow arrival).

b) With the C lubs breaking 4-2 there will be two Club losers in addition to the SA. To make the contract Declarer will need to avoid a Heart loser. Draw the trumps; then use the DK which is the only entry to Dummy, to finesse in Hearts.

HAND 16

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| | KQJ76 | | |
| | 9 | | |
| | A76 | | |
| | Q765 | | |
| A432 | | 5 | Dealer: East |
| 32 | | AKJT654 | Declarer: East |
| KQ32 | | 54 | Contract: 4H |
| AKJ | | 432 | Lead: DJ |
| | T98 | | |
| | Q87 | | |
| | JT98 | | |
| | T98 | | |

- a) The recommended auction is:

3H — P--- 4H

Explain why West raises to **4H** instead of bidding **3-NT**.

- b) In **3-NT** Declarer would get the **SK** for a lead and would ultimately lose four Spade tricks, one in Hearts (to the **Q**), and one in Diamonds. In **4H** Declarer will still lose to the **HQ** and **DA** and cannot afford to lose two tricks in Clubs.
- c) Explain what a double finesse is and how to play the Clubs for just one loser.