

“Scrambling 2-NT,” “Good-Bad 2-NT,” and “Super-Unusual 2-NT”

By definition, an “**Intervenor**” is the one who “*Doubles*” or overcalls when the Opponents have opened the bidding, and the “**Advancer**” is his/her responding Partner. Several of the more frequently-used, conventional uses of 2-NT are seen in “**The Unusual-2-NT**” Convention (an overcall by an Intervenor asking for the Advancer to choose from either of the two lower, as-yet, un-bid suits) and “**4-Way Transfers**,” opposite Partner’s opening bid of 1-NT (a transfer to Diamonds). The following are examples of three additional conventional uses of “2-NT,” used both in and absent competition.

“Scrambling 2-NT”

A 2-NT bid, in competition, is usually not natural, except in a very few number of cases. The “**Scrambling 2-NT**” bid is a 2-NT response showing two 4-card suits in response to Partner’s **Take-Out Double** in either the direct (2nd) seat or the balancing (4th) seat at the 2-level in the “*sandwich position*.” This bid acts as a “**Responsive Double**.” to Partner’s “**Take-Out Double**.”

| | | |
|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| 1S/Pass | | 1S/Pass/Pass |
| “Double”/?? | Pass/”2-NT” | (or) |
| 2S/Pass | Pass/”2-NT” | Pass/”Double”/?? |
| | 2S/Pass | |

A “**Scrambling 2-NT**” is, therefore, used where a Player has two 4-card suits and the Partnership “*scrambles*” to the best spot by bidding their lowest-ranking, 4-card suits “*up-the-line*.” The bid is conventional and has nothing to do with an attempt to play, at any level, in a No-Trump contract. It basically says, “*Partner, I know you want me to bid, but I am uncertain as to which suit to pick!*”

The “**Scrambling 2-NT**” bid is used after Partner makes a **Take-Out Double** in the direct or balancing seat and you hold two, 4-card suits. It is designed to find an 8-card fit and asks the Doubler to bid his-her 4-card suit, or if more than one, to bid them “*up-the-ladder*.”

You hold: **Kxx Qxxx Jxxx xx**. If you bid Hearts, you could wind up in a 4-3 fit (and the same with bidding Diamonds). **Why guess?** If you bid “2-NT” as a “*scramble*,” Partner can bid his/her 4-card suits up-the-line. With **xx Kxxx AKx QJxx**, Partner then bids 3-Clubs over which you bid 3-Diamonds to deny holding 4-Clubs, and then Partner bids 3-Hearts to show that suit.

The advantages of using a “**Scrambling 2-NT**” are:

- (1) You and your Partner may make more aggressive “*Doubles*” knowing that you can find your 4-4 fits safely.
- (2) There is a negative inference if Partner does not go thru “**Scrambling 2-NT**,” then the Doubler will know that the responding suit is a 5-card or longer suit.
- (3) What else is 2-NT supposed to mean? Natural? Very rare, why not bid 3-NT or if trumps are sufficient, simply “*Pass*” the “*Double*” for penalty?

In summary, opposite a **Takeout Double**, when the Opponents have found a fit, if the Advancer has one clearly preferred suit, he/she bids it. But if the Advancer has 2 suits, he/she has a choice to make. One could just guess which suit to bid, but a better option is to bid “2-NT” showing “*two places to play*.” Over this “**Scrambling 2-NT**,” therefore, both Intervenor and Advancer bid their suits “*up-the-line*” until they can agree on a suit.

“Good-Bad 2-NT”

You hold the following hand: **73 AQJ62 8 KQT95** You open the bidding with **1H**, LHO “*Passes*,” Responding Partner bids **1-NT**, and your RHO overcalls **2S**. Partner holds, at most 3-Spades, else he/she would have responded initially **1S**. The Opponents, therefore, hold at least 8-Spades, so you must not leave them in **2S**. You might bid **3C**, but that would likely signify a HCP holding of at least 17 HCP’s.

How does Partner know that you are just competing, or if you really hold a hand with better than minimum opening count (17 or more HCP’s)? The problem is solved with a “**Good-Bad 2-NT**.”

Here is how this conventional “**Good-Bad 2-NT**” works:

In a competitive auction, when RHO makes any 2-level overcall, Partner’s “2-NT” bid is not natural. It shows a desire to compete to the 3-level, and requires Partner, the Advancer, to “puppet” a bid of “3C” after which the “2-NT” bidder, the Intervenor, shows his/her suit. Alternatively, bidding directly to the 3-level, in competition, without relaying initially, shows extra values.

(Examples when used by an Opening Bidder) The bidding has proceeded:

1H??
2S 1S
1-NT

a) You, North, hold: **84 AKQ8643 K95 6** = North re-bids “**2-NT**,” and following Responder’s “*puppet*” bid of “**3C**,” you relay to **3H**, showing a weak opening hand.

b) You, North, hold: **6 AKQ32 AKJ86 94** = North re-bids **3D** directly.

c) You, North, hold: **94 A9754 AKJ75 7** = North re-bids “**2-NT**,” and following Responder’s “*puppet*” bid of “**3C**,” you relay to **3D**, showing a weak opening hand.

(Examples when used by an Overcaller) The bidding has proceeded:

1H
?? 2D
2H

a) You, West, hold: **K76 A52 K986 984** = West re-bids **3D** directly, showing a good 4-card supportive raise.

b) You, West, hold: **984 A43 Q975 652** = West re-bids “**2-NT**,” and following Responder’s “*puppet*” bid of “**3C**,” you relay to **3D**, showing a weak, minimum raise.

Using the “**Good-Bad 2-NT**” will enable a Partnership to compete effectively when the Opponents have found their fit at the 2-level. Being capable of letting Partner know that you have a good or bad 3-level competitive call is a much more useful piece of information to convey than a natural **2-NT**.

“Super-Unusual 2-NT”

Most Partnerships play the “**Unusual 2-NT**” to show 5-5 or better in the two, lower, as-yet, un-bid suits. This convention is usually used in the direct (2nd) seat following an opening bid of one-of-a-suit by the Opponents. The “**Super-Unusual 2-NT**” acts similarly to the “**Unusual 2-NT**” bid, but, instead, **shows any two suits**, and is used in the balancing (4th) seat after the Opponents have terminated the auction, having found a “**Golden-Fit**” at the 2-level.

Partner, the **Advancer**, will respond with his/her lowest-ranking, 3-card or longer, un-bid suit. If the suit bid by the Advancer is one of the two held by the **Intervenor**, he/she will “*Pass*.” If it is not one of the **Intervenor**’s two suits, he/she will bid the next higher-ranking of the two suits held and the Advancer can then either “*Pass*,” thereby selecting that one, else bid the remaining, as-yet, un-bid suit.

The object in the use of the “**Super-Unusual 2-NT**” convention is for Opponents to sneak safely into the auction, to compete when the Opponents have dropped the bidding at the 2-level, and to find any playable, trump suit, not necessarily the best trump fit held.

Suppose the bidding has proceeded as follows:

| | | |
|-------------|----------------|-------------------|
| | 1S/Pass | |
| Pass | | Pass”2-NT” |
| | 2S | |

You, East, in the balancing seat, hold the following: **2 KT875 53 KQ984** It’s likely that if you were to “*Double*,” your responding Partner, West, would likely bid **3D**. *NOT PLEASANT!*

Alternatively, you bid “**2-NT**.” Suppose, for example, Partner, West, here, were to hold a **4-5-1-3** shape. West, the Advancer, bids **3C**, in this instance, which East would then “*Pass*.” Had East held only the red suits, Diamonds and Hearts, he/she would have relayed to **3D** which the Advancer would then correct to **3H**.