

Notrump Opening Bids

1 NT Opening Bid Responses

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Introduction

Most balanced hands 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2 and 5-3-3-2 hands will be opened 1NT including those with a 5-card major and no convenient rebid with HCP range depending on partnership agreement.

Most 5-3-3-2 major suit hands with HCP in the appropriate range will be opened 1NT. Thus a 1♥ or 1♠ opening bid will either have a 2nd 4+ card holding or be out of the 1NT opening range. I recommend using the **Flannery 2♦** opening bid showing 4=5=x-x distribution and 11-15 HCP so 1H opening bids will either be strong enough to reverse into 2♠ with the 4=5-x-x distribution, have a lower ranking 4+ card suit, or be out of the 1NT opening range (15+ HCP when playing a 12-14 weak notrump).

It's legal to open 4-4-4-1 hands where the singleton is an Ace, King, or Queen. Opening 1NT with 5-4-2-2 is also OK if most of the strength is in the short suits although this should be avoided as it can be a problem with **Crawling Stayman** where Responder expects no more than one 2-card suit.

The opening ranges may be 10-12 (Baby), 12-14 (Weak), and 15-17 (Strong). This discussion presumes the same response structure regardless of opening range. I prefer the 12-14 weak notrump range in all positions and vulnerability as it maximizes the number of hands opened 1NT or 1 of a major.

Responder first needs to decide the range of their hand. The table below gives guidelines depending on the opening Notrump range.

Responder's Ranges Depending on Opening Notrump Range

Type/ Range	Baby 10-12	Weak 12-14	Strong 15-17	Comments
Weak	0-8	0-6	0-6	Get out of 1NT to some suit.
Partial	8-12	6-12	6-8	Pass when balanced, look for fit.
Invite	12-14	10-12	8-10	Look for fit, ask with 2♠
Game	15-21	13-19	11-16	Look for fit, bid to game
Slam	21+	19+	16+	Ask with 2♠ quantitative, find fit

Responder's First Bid

Here's a summary of Responder's first bids after Opener's 1NT opening broken down into level.

2-Level Responses

Responder's hand may range from very weak looking for a safe place to play at the two-level to slam going.

- 2♣ Stayman asks Opener to show 4-card major suits. Responder usually will have at least one 4-card major. Responder may use this without a 4-card major planning to use **Garbage Stayman** or **Crawling Stayman** as a runout to find at least a 4-3 fit. Responder may be planning a 3-level **Smolen** bid with 4-5 in the majors and game forcing values after Opener's 2♦ response. Responder may have a very strong hand planning a **Baze Slam Try** after a 2♥ or 2♠ response.
- 2♦ Jacoby Transfer to 2♥. With a weak hand playing in a 5-2 fit may be the best you can do, or the opponents may get in in spades or a 3-level minor suit.
- 2♥ Jacoby Transfer to 2♠. This is pretty much the same with a weak hand as the 2♥, except that the opponents have to come in at the 3-level.
- 2♠ Range Ask/Transfer to 3♣. This asks Opener to bid 2NT if he wouldn't accept an invitation to 3NT or to bid 3♣ if he would. After a 2NT bid by Opener, Responder will bid 3♣ with a weak hand with 6+ clubs, pass with an invitational hand, bid 3NT with a game forcing hand or hand that qualifies for a quantitative slam ask. Other game forcing and slam asking sequences will be covered in the section on the 2♠ Range Ask. The range ask is only used when Responder doesn't have at least one 4-card major guaranteeing at least one 4-card major when using the 2♣ **Stayman** response. The only time Responder would be 2♣ **Stayman** without a 4-card major would be planning to jump to 4♣ as **Gerber** after Opener's 2-level response.
- 2N Transfer to 3♦. Responder may use this with 6+ diamonds regardless of strength. Opener will bid 3♣ as a **Super Accept** with Axx, Kxx or xxxx in diamonds, or 3♦ with lesser diamonds. Responder may pass or correct to 3♦ with less than game forcing values.

3-Level Responses, game forcing

All Responder's 3-level responses are game forcing. These aren't all the possible 3-level bids used after 1NT opening bids, but IHMO are the most useful, particularly using 3♣ as **Puppet Stayman** rather than a 5-5 minor suited hand.

3♣ **Puppet Stayman** asking Opener to show a 4 or 5 card majors.

This and the following 3-level responses are all game forcing.

3♦ Shows 5-5 or better in the minors. Opener may bid 3NT, 4♣ or 4♥ setting trump or make a control bid in hearts or spades agreeing diamonds. Responder can then make an appropriate **Kickback** keycard ask.

3♥ 3=1-5-4 mini-splinter in hearts, game forcing. Opener may then bid 3NT with hearts stopped, bid a 4-card minor, setting trump, or bid 4NT showing equal length in the minors.

3♠ 1=3-5-4 mini-splinter in spades, game forcing. Opener's responses are like the responses 3♥ above.

3N To Play

4-Level Responses, South African Texas

These bids are all part of **South African Texas Transfers** which is a replacement for regular **Texas Transfers**. The primary advantage is that Responder may choose to be declarer if his hand has tenaces that should be protected on the opening lead.

Since the 4♣ bid is no longer available for **Gerber**, to use **Gerber**, one must first bid 2♣ **Stayman**, then jump to 4♣ after Opener's 2-level response.

4♣ Transfer to 4♥. Normally a sign-off, but Responder may bid 4♠ **Kickback** keycard asking after Opener bids 4♥. Opener may bid 4♦ with slam interest as also used with **NAMYATS**

4♦ Transfer to 4♠. Normally a sign-off, but Responder may bid 4NT **Kickback** keycard after Opener bids 4♠. Opener may bid 4♥ with slam interest as also used with **NAMYATS**

4♥ To Play.

4♠ To Play.

2♣ Stayman

This guarantees at least 1 4-card major suit unless Responder jumps to 4♣ after Opener's 2 level response in which case that is **1430 Gerber** which must be alerted to say that Responder may not have a 4-card major. Responder may be 4-5 in the majors.

2♦ No 4 or 5 card major

Pass Garbage Stayman weak hand and short clubs, 4-4-3=2, 4-4=4=1, or 4-4=5=0.

2♥ Crawling Stayman Weak hand with 4-4=2=3, 3-4=3=3, 2-4-4-3

Opener may pass with 3 hearts, bid 3♠ with 3 spades, or bid 4-card minor. Responder will bid 4-card minor with fewer than 4 spades.

2♠ Crawling Stayman Weak hand, 4-3=3=3, 4-3-4-2, 4-2-3-4=1-4-4, or 4=0,5-4. Responder will bid 4-card minor with fewer than 4 spades.

2NT Invitational values with at least one 4-card major

3♣ Game/Slam forcing with 5+ clubs and at least one 4-card major.

Opener may sign-off in 3NT, or make control bids at the 3 level with a club fit. Responder's 4♣ bid is now **Minorwood** keycard ask. Responder's 5 level suit bids would then be **Exclusion**.

3♦ Weak with 5+ diamonds and at least one 4-card major.

Opener may pass or correct with appropriate values. Responder generally has invitational values that would have game interest with the proper major suit fit.

With 5+ diamonds and game/slam interest, Responder will first bid 2NT transfer to diamonds, then bid his shorter major giving Opener a good idea of Responder's shape (how does Responder handle 4-4=5=0 hands?).

3♥ 5=4-x-x **Smolen** game force.

Opener signs off in appropriate game.

3♠ 4=5-x-x **Smolen** game force.

Opener signs off in appropriate game.

3NT To Play

4♣ Gerber 1430

Opener must **alert** this saying the Responder does not have to have a 4-card major.

Responses are 1430 with the 3rd and 4th steps 2 aces weak and 2 aces with extra values including a source of tricks or as Barbara Nist puts it, 2 and I hate my hand, 2 and I love my hand.

NOTE A 4♣ bid by Responder after 2♦ bid by Opener is **Gerber 1430** and must be alerted. This doesn't apply after 2♥ or 2♠ Responses as 4♣ is then Keycard ask for the major, the **BAZE Slam Try**..

2♥ Opener has 4 hearts, may have 4 spades.

Responder may pass, invite, bid game, or look for slam.

Pass.

*2NT Invitational. Opener may pass, bid 3♠, 3NT or 4♠ to play. Opener knows that Responder has a 4-card spade suit as 2♣ guarantees a 4-card major unless Responder intended to jump to 4C **Gerber**.*

3NT Opener may pass or bid 4♠ to play holding 4-4 in the majors.

*4♣ Keycard Ask for hearts, **Baze Slam Try**. 1430 Responses.*

4♦ Balanced slam try in hearts. Responder has 3½ losers or fewer.

3♠ Unbalanced Slam Try, 3½ losers or fewer. Opener may then ask:

3NT What Shortness?

4♣ Clubs

4♦ Diamonds

4♥ Spades

4NT 16-17 HCP Balanced without 4♥.

Opener knows Responder has 4 spades so may cue bid aces with spades and slam interest.

2♠ Opener has 4 Spades, does not have 4 hearts.

Pass

2NT Invitational. Opener may pass, or bid 3NT..

3NT To play.

4♣ Keycard Ask for Spades, **Baze Slam Try**. 1430 Responses.

4♦ Balanced slam try in Spades. Responder has 3½ losers or fewer.

3♥ Unbalanced Slam Try, 3½ losers or fewer. Opener may then ask:

3♠ What Shortness?

3NT (I have a Void). Opener may then ask:

4♣ What is your Void?

4♦ Diamonds

4♥ Hearts

4♠ Clubs

4♣ Club Singleton

4♦ Diamond Singleton

4♥ Heart Singleton

4NT 16-17 HCP Balanced without **4♠**.

This is highly suggestive of slam (blame transfer).

3♥ Opener has 5 hearts. Opener will have 5-3-3-2 distribution as he will open **1♥** with a fewer than 4 spades and a 4-card or longer minor suit. With 4=5-x-x distribution and 11-15 HCP, Opener will bid **2♦ Flannery**.

2♦ Transfer to 2♥

Opener will use **Fit Showing Super Accepts** with 4 or more hearts.

After one of the **Super Accepts** below 3♥ Responder may retransfer by bidding 3♦.

2♥ Fewer than 4 hearts (Alert**)**

2♠ 4+ hearts, maximum values, doubleton spade

2NT 4+ hearts maximum values, balanced or doubleton diamonds
(allows retransfer with 3♦ bid by Responder)

3♣ 4+ hearts, maximum values, doubleton club

3♥ 4+ hearts with less than maximum values.

2♥ Transfer to 2♠

Opener will use **Fit Showing Super Accepts** with 4 or more hearts.

After one of the **Super Accepts** below 3♠ Responder may retransfer by bidding 3♥.

2♠ Fewer than 4 spades (Alert**)**

2NT 4+ spades maximum values, balanced or doubleton hearts (allows retransfer with 3♠ bid by Responder)

3♣ 4+ spades, maximum values, doubleton club

3♦ 4+ Spades, maximum values, doubleton diamond

3♠ 4+ spades with less than maximum values.

2♠ Range Ask/Transfer to 3♣

This bid is used when responder has one of several hands:

- Invitational with no 4-card major
- Quantitative slam interest which would require a 4NT bid without this range ask.
- Weak hand with 6+ clubs
- Game forcing hand with 6+ clubs (any minor suit game has slam potential)

2NT Response Opener wouldn't accept an invitation

This is described in detail in [this](#) article.

Pass, Responder has the invitational hand

3♣ 6+ clubs sign off

3♦ 6+ clubs short diamonds game forcing or 6+ clubs with slam interest

Opener may bid 3♥ to ask which type of hand it is, and Responder shows the unbalanced type with 3♠ or the balanced type with 3NT. This may be in conflict with my treatment below.

3♥ 6+ clubs short hearts game forcing

3♠ 6+ clubs short spades game forcing

All of these responses apply over Opener's 3♣ as well.

After any of the game forcing bids above 3♣ Opener must bid 4♣ setting trump. Responder then has several options to explore slam possibilities.

4♦ Kickback keycard ask. This implies that any shortness shown is singleton, not void. If this isn't used, the remaining bids start control showing sequences if they aren't Exclusion.

4♥ 1st round control in hearts or Exclusion 3014 in hearts if preceded by Responder's 3♥ bid

4♠ 1st round control in spades or Exclusion 3014 in spades if preceded by Responder's 3♠ bid

4N Exclusion 3014 with void in diamonds. This is necessary as the 3♦ bid is ambiguous.

3NT Sign off with game forcing hand that had slam interest.

3♣ Opener would accept an invitation to game.

With long clubs, Responder will pass with the weak hand or make the same responses described above.

3NT Responder has balanced invitational hand.

6NT Responder has the hand suitable for a Quantitative slam enquiry.

2N Transfer to 3♦

Responder may have a weak hand with 6+ diamonds, but isn't limited. Opener has two responses.

3 ♣ is a Super Accept showing Axx, Kxx, xxxx diamond support.

Responder may sign off in 3 ♦, 3NT, or explore slam making control bids below the level of a 4♥ **Kickback** keycard asking bid. Responder's immediate bids above the level of **Kickback** would be **Exclusion** keycard asks.

4♥ **Kickback** keycard ask

4♠ **Exclusion** with Spade void

4N **Exclusion** with Heart void (**Kickback** suit)

5♣ **Exclusion** with Club void

3♦ Accepts Transfer to diamonds

Responder's options are the same as after the **Super Accept**.

3♣ Puppet Stayman

This is a game forcing bid asking Opener if he has one or more 4 or 5 card majors. Typically Responder will use this when 3=3-x-x while using the 2♣ **Stayman** bid with one or more 4-card majors. Opener's responses then are:

3♦ 1 or more 4-card majors. Responder's bids then are:

3♥ 4-Card Spade Suit

3♠ 4-Card Heart Suit

3N To play with no 4-card major

4♣ 4-4 in the majors with slam interest

Opener will set trump by bidding his preferred major suit. Responder then can then try to find slam using **Kickback**, **Exclusion**, etc.

4♦ 4-4 in the majors without slam interest

Opener then bids game in his preferred major.

3♥ Opener has 5 hearts.

Responder with raise to game in hearts or 3NT or explore slam if appropriate.

3♠ Opener has 5 spades.

Responder will raise to game in spades or 3NT or explore slam if appropriate.

3N Opener has no 4 or 5 card major.

3♦ 5-5 Minors GF

Opener may sign off in 3NT or chose suit by bidding 4♣ or 4♦ which allows Responder to ask for keycards using either **Kickback** or **Exclusion** (4NT is Exclusion in the **Kickback** suit).

Responder's bids after Opener's responses are:

3NT Response by Opener.

4♣ **Minorwood** keycard ask for clubs.

4♦ **Minorwood** keycard ask for diamonds.

4♥ 6-keycard Ask for clubs and diamonds. Responder will set trump later.

4♠ 0 or 3 Keycards in clubs and diamonds

Responder will sign off in 5m if Opener's response is ambiguous. With 3 keycards, Opener may show his cheapest king.

4NT Relay Asks for Queens in clubs and diamonds.

5♣ No queens

5♦ Queen of Clubs

5♥ Queen of Diamonds

5♠ Queen of clubs and queen of diamonds

Responder may relay with the cheapest bid asking for **Specific Kings** or sign off in 6m.

3♥ 3=1-5-4 Mini Splinter GF

Opener may sign off in 3NT, 4♠, or bid 4♣ or 4♦ to set trump, or bid 4NT for Responder to pick the appropriate minor.

3♠ 1=3-5-4 Mini Splinter GF

Opener may sign off in 3NT, 4♥ or bid 4♣ or 4♦ to set trump, or bid 4NT for Responder to pick the appropriate minor.

4♣ Transfer to 4♥ (South African Texas)

Responder may bid **Kickback** with slam interest, but not wanting to provide the opponents the opportunity to make a 2♦ lead directing double.

4♦ Transfer to 4♠ (South African Texas)

Responder may bid **Kickback** with slam interest, but not wanting to provide the opponents the opportunity to make a 2♥ lead directing double.

4♥ To Play (South African Texas)

4♠ To Play (South African Texas)

Responses if Opponents Interfere

These are the actions depending on Opponent's action. Doubles of Overcaller's bid is generally for takeout, not penalty.

2♣, Systems On Regardless of meaning or Double not for penalty

X Stayman

Pass, wait and see depending on meaning of 2♣ bid.

All other responses are as if there were no interference.

X Opponent Doubles for Penalty (DONT Runouts)

All Bids here must be alerted.

XX Business, forcing X through 2♠

2♣, 2♦ or 2♥ Suit bid and higher suit (like DONT)

Opener may pass or correct.

Pass – Forcing. Responder has single-suited hand.

Opener must bid 5-card suit or redouble asking for Responder's suit.

2♦, 2♥, or 2♠ Rubensohl transfer responses.

There are several options depending on meaning of Overcaller's bid. In particular the bids that show two-suited hands present challenges. [This Article](#) has some interesting approaches.

2♦ or 2♥ Natural or DONT showing second suit.

2♥, 2♠ To Play. These show at least 5 cards in the suit.

2N Transfer to 3♣, Responder has 5 or more clubs

3♣ Transfer to diamonds, Ask/Stayman.

Opener should bid 3NT with a diamond stop or treat this as **Stayman**. If Responder doesn't have at least one 4-card major, he will bid 3♠ asking for a diamond stop.

Without a diamond stop Opener will bid a 4-card major as he would respond to a normal 2♣ **Stayman** by Responder. With no diamond stop or 4-card major, Opener will bid his cheapest 4+ card minor suit.

3♦ Transfer to hearts over Overcaller's 2♦ Bid.

Responder has 5 or more hearts, at least invitational as Responder could bid 2♥ to play.

3♦ If Overcaller has bid 2♥ this is Ask/Stayman.

Opener will accept the transfer to hearts without a stopper, bid 3♠ with a stopper, and 4 spades, or bid 3NT with a heart stopper.

3♥ Transfer to spades, Responder has 5 or more spades, at least invitational.

3♠ Asks for stop in Overcaller's suit(s).

Opener will bid 3NT with a stop, or 4♣ looking for a minor suit fit.

2♦ Overcaller shows both majors.

In general, when Overcaller's bid shows two suits, transfers into one of the known suits show stoppers in that suit.

2NT Transfer to **3♣**, Invitational or better.

3♣ Transfer to 3♦, Invitational or better.

3♦ Transfer into hearts shows a heart stop, asks for spade stop.

3♥ Transfer into Spades shows spade stop, asks for heart stop.

3♠ Asks for stops in both majors.

Opener will bid 3NT with stoppers, or 4♣ looking for a minor suit game.

2♥ *Natural or showing hearts or hearts and a minor.*

2♠ To play.

2NT Transfer to **3♣**, Invitational or better.

3♣ Transfer to 3♦, Invitational or better.

3♦ Ask/Stayman.

Opener will bid 3♥ accepting the transfer without a heart stop, bid 3S with a stop in hearts and 4 spades, bid 3N with a heart stop and fewer than 4♠, or bid 4C looking for a minor suit game.

3♥ Transfer to spades. Invitational or better values as **2♠** is available to play.

3♠ Asks for heart stop, denies 4 spades.

2♠ *Natural or showing spades and a minor.*

2NT Transfer to **3♣**, Invitational or better.

3♣ Transfer to 3♦, Invitational or better.

3♦ Transfer to 3♥, Invitational or better.

3♥ Ask/Stayman. Responder has 4 hearts and values for game.

3♠ without a spade stop

3N fewer than 4 hearts and a spade stop.

4C Fewer than 4 hearts and no spade stop.

4♥ 4 hearts.

3♠ Asks for spade stop, Responder has fewer than 4 hearts.

3N To play.

4♣ Looking for a minor suit game.

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