



Bidding Basics

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Responding to a weak two-bid

In this article, your partner opens with a weak two-bid – 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠ – showing a decent six-card suit and roughly 5–11 HCP. How do you proceed?

Responding to a weak two-bid is a fairly easy topic to master if you start by dividing it into two parts: Hands where you have interest in game or slam or hands where you don't.

1. You have interest in game or slam

This is likely to occur only about 10–15% of the time. Because your partner's hand is weak, you will need a pretty good hand to act. If you think you have enough for slam (very rare), you can just bid it, or maybe use Blackwood. If partner opens 2♥, and you hold:

♠A K ♥K Q 4 2 ♦2 ♣A K Q 8 7 6,

who could blame you for using Blackwood and placing the contract in 6♥ opposite one ace and 7♥ opposite two. Make the hand a bit weaker, and you might just settle for game, by jumping to 4♥ with something like:

♠Q 8 2 ♥K Q 3 ♦5 ♣A K Q 8 7 6.

Try to avoid jumping to 3NT unless you are sure that is where you want to play. Opposite partner's 2♠, you would venture 3NT with:

♠5 ♥K Q ♦A K Q J 10 7 6 5 ♣K Q.

If you bid a new suit, you are showing at least five cards and it is forcing for one round: Partner may not pass.

You also have the option of responding with 2NT. This doesn't mean you want to play in 2NT. It asks opener to describe further (more on this in a future article). To use this 2NT response, you would have to have game interest. A reasonable guideline to know if you have game interest is the "Rule of 17." Add your high-card points to the number of trumps you have in support of partner's suit. If it is less than 17, you probably don't have game interest.

2. You don't have interest in game or slam

This is by far the most common situation. Any time you don't meet the aforementioned Rule of 17, game is probably not in the cards. Does that mean you should pass? Usually, yes. However, if you have support for partner (at least three cards), you can make a pest out of yourself by furthering partner's preempt. Whether or not your RHO has acted, you should raise to the three level if you have three-card support and to the four level with four-card support. For example, raise partner's 2♦ to 3♦ with:

♠K 7 6 5 ♥6 5 ♦K J 2 ♣J 10 3 2.

Raise partner's 2♠ to 4♠ with:

♠Q J 9 8 ♥A 8 7 6 5 ♦3 ♣K J 2.

This strategy is based on the Law of Total Tricks, which suggests competing to the three level with a nine-card fit and to the four level with a 10-card fit. Some judgment is needed. If you

are vulnerable and/or very flat (like 4–3–3–3) and/or full of queens/jacks, use a little caution. For example, don't raise a vulnerable 2♥ opening to 4♥ with:

♠Q J 5 ♥9 8 7 6 ♦K J 8 ♣Q J 9.

Once you have raised partner preemptively, don't bid again (nor should your partner).

If you digested the above, you will note that you would raise 2♠ to 4♠ with either of these hands:

♠A Q 8 2 ♥10 ♦K J 9 5 4 ♣10 9 6
or

♠K Q ♥K Q 3 ♦A K Q 10 8 7 ♣3 2.

With the first hand, you are doing it as a preempt, and with the second, to make. How will your partner know? He won't, but doesn't need to. Your opponents will also be guessing. ➤

BIDDING BASICS QUIZ

For the first four questions, nobody is vulnerable and partner deals and opens 2♥. What is your response?

1. ♠A ♥AQ76 ♦AQ7654 ♣J2
2. ♠KQJ10 ♥Q32 ♦KQJ82 ♣2
3. ♠A2 ♥Q32 ♦J10876 ♣542
4. ♠Q854 ♥J ♦K8762 ♣AQ2

For the next three questions, both sides are vulnerable, and LHO passes followed by partner's 2♠. RHO passes. What is your response?

5. ♠4 ♥K2 ♦AKQJ765 ♣AQ2
6. ♠KJ32 ♥KJ2 ♦Q1076 ♣J2
7. ♠2 ♥KQ765 ♦AJ54 ♣J32

Both sides are vulnerable, partner opens 2♦ and RHO doubles. What is your response?

8. ♠A2 ♥J7654 ♦KJ2 ♣1076

Answers

1. 4♥, expecting partner to make it.
2. 2NT. Find out more about partner's hand (opposite a minimum, you won't want to be in game.)
3. 3♥. A preemptive raise. Partner had better be on the same page!
4. Pass. You are high enough.
5. 3NT. This is to play. Partner is not supposed to correct back to his suit.
6. 3♠. A compromise between a cowardly pass and a too-risky 4♠.
7. Pass. Don't jump from the fire into the frying pan with 3♥!
8. 3♦. You make it too easy on your opponents if you pass.