

Responding to Partners Weak Two Bid

The foremost thing in your mind should be the fact that Partner doesn't have much and is not offering the same thing as when she Opens normally. It is highly unlikely that she would be able to support any alternative suit you have to offer. Facing a weak hand you would normally have to have a very strong hand to consider Game. Of course, the better your support for Partners suit the less you need in HCP. With these issues in mind your options are as follows.

1. Bid a New Suit – Forcing for one Round

This is a constructive Bid and you should have an expectation of reaching Game if you do find a fit for your suit. To bid a new suit you should have a minimum of 14 HCP and a Good 5-Card suit. The longer and stronger your suit, the lower in the HCP range for your hand. This is done in anticipation that a 3NT Contract might be in the offing. Note: If a new suit is not forcing it is Alertable.

Most Partnerships agree that a new suit is forcing for one round (note: there is a place on your Convention Card to enter this agreement). With 3-Card support, your Partner should show support for your new suit, by raising it a level. With no support Partner should rebid their suit and that is where the Contract is played. The purpose of bidding a side suit should be to show a stopper in that suit.

2. Raise Partner's suit

Direct raises of Partners suit are to play, the weak-two bidder should Pass. The raise of a weak-two bid is made with a corresponding **weak hand** and 3-Card support. This is done as a preventative measure, increasing the preempt in an attempt to further exclude opponents with a strong hand.

There are even times when you might even raise a Weak-Two Open in a Major to Game level. Of course, you probably want to have favorable vulnerability on your side. Example: Partner Opens a weak 2♣ and you are holding ♠9753 ♥5 ♦A9753 ♣T97. The Opponents likely have 26 or more HCP and your 4♣ Bid makes it almost impossible for them to find Game likely in ♥'s.

With a strong hand such as ♠Q753 ♥AKQ5 ♦3 ♣KQ85 you might also raise to 4♣, but this time you have every expectation to make the bid. And don't worry about missing Slam. If Partner had a hand that is needed to take Partnership to Slam he wouldn't have Opened a Weak-Two.

3. Ask for More Information

A bid of 2NT is Conventional (note it on your Card). See Rule of 17 below. It is asking Partner for more information. In particular, 2NT is asking for certain information about your hand (a) either looking for an outside entrance to your hand to exploit the length, or (b) checking for possibility for Game. Partner is anticipating using your long suit to develop Tricks and may not have a holding in your suit that would allow her to use your good suit as an entry to your hand to use the suit, likely in a NoTrump Contract. It is called 'asking for a feature', feature meaning an outside **A**, or a protected Honor such as **Kx**, **Qxx** or even **Jxxx** in another suit.

4. Pass

This is the most common response to Partners Weak-Two Bid

Note: There is not much benefit to opening a weak-Two bid in 4th seat. Clearly your opponents don't need to be stopped from trying to find Game. Unless your hand meets the rule of 15, Pass in the 4th seat.

Rule of 17 – Responding to the Weak-Two

The Rule of 17 implies that if, as Responder, your hand evaluation equals or exceeds 17 that you

should find a response to your Partner's Weak-Two Opening. The two most common, mentioned above, are (a) Feature Asking and (b) Ogust. To arrive at Responder's decision point Add your total HCP to your number of Partner's Trump suit. If that total ≥ 17 do something other than raising the preempt..

Feature Asking

Responding with 2NT can ask Partner for more information. What we mean by a feature is "Do you have an outside entry into your hand". The basis of this question is the responder has a strong hand with either few or strong Cards in Openers suit. In this situation the responder must, in a NT Contract, have a means of entering the Openers hand other than through the Openers suit, in order to exploit the length contained in the Openers suit, using the length tricks in openers hand to make a 3NT contract. Example: Partner Opens or OverCalls a weak-two 2♥ and you hold: ♠QJ75 ♥A53 ♦A753 ♣K7.

Your hand has 14 HCP and 3 ♥'s yielding a value of 17 you can use the rule of 17. This implies you are looking for a Game contract. You Bid 2NT asking Partner if she has an outside entry to her hand. Here are three different Opening Hands and the Bids they engender:

(1) ♠K75 ♥KQT972 ♦J964 ♣ (2) ♠75 ♥KQT972 ♦J964 ♣Q (3) ♠9 ♥KJ9862 ♦Q97 ♣Q95

In Hand 1 you hold a protected ♠Q and ♦J – two entries looking at the strength of your ♥K, only the worst of splits in that suit could get in the way of establishing an additional 2 or three tricks you should respond to Partners 2NT with 3♦ which indicates that you have an establish-able ♥ suit with ♦'s as the potential entry suit. The ♠K is a plus as a potential second entry to run the ♥'s in a NoTrump Contract.

In Hand 2 the Trump suit is unchanged but the your hand is weaker and with the lone entry it is not as attractive as in the previous case. Your hand is great if ♥'s are Trump but not as attractive for a NoTrump Game try. You should respond to Partners 2NT with 3♥ indicating ♥'s are the place to play. Partner can then decide on Passing or trying for Game in ♥'s.

In Hand 3 you have two entries but whether the suit can be established before those entries are used up is questionable. You should probably bid 3♥ and settle for part score if Partner's ♥'s. are not that good. If Partners Hand is stronger than implied by the 2NT bid or his ♥'s are good he can take it to Game.

The next option put's a lot of the if's and ambiguities aside putting all the decisions on the holder of the stronger hand.

OGUST

An alternative to feature-asking the 2NT asks Partner for a better description of his hand. The expected descriptions fall into 4 categories and provide the Responder with the type of information necessary to make a forward going decision. Using the standard definition of a good suit, The Openers responses are called Ogust responses:

3♣ → Weak Suit, Weak Hand. The weakest response [1 of top 3/2 of top 5 and 5-7 HCP]

3♦ → Strong -Suit, Weak Hand 2 of top 3/3 of top 5 and 6-7 HCP

3♥ → Weak Suit, Strong Hand 1 of top 3/2 of top 5 and 8-9 HCP

3♠ → Strong Suit, Strong Hand 2 of top 3/3 of top 5 and 8-9 HCP

3NT → 3 of top 4 and 8-10 HCP Very Strong Suit & Strong hand

The mnemonic for Ogust is 1-2-1-2-3, noting that bidding either Minor → weak Hand, bidding either Major → Strong Hand. Minors ==> Weak Hand – Majors ==> Strong Hand

Note: Since Ogust supplies a lot of information the Rule of 17 can be relaxed by a point or two to 15, particularly when the response allows Responder to bid Opener's suit at the 3-level.