

Jacoby 2NT – Forcing Raise over Major Suit Opener

We know that a 2-level support response shows a minimum (6-9/10 HCP), and a 3-level support response shows a **limit raise** (10-12 HCP), but how does a Responder show an even better response? Commonly jump bidding to 4 of Partner's Major shows a weak hand with 5-Card support. With 13+ PP and at least 4-Card support it seems that Game is in the proverbial 'bag'. You have 9 Trump at least 25 PP (with 4+Card fit you can count Shortness) and we are still at the 1-level; plenty of room to explore for more.

Again we can thank Oswald Jacoby for an answer to our dilemma. He created a bidding sequence that by the time you get to Game level you'll know whether there is more than just Game in the two hands. As the title suggests if you have 13+ PP and 4+Card support for Partners 1♥ or 1♠ Opening, a response bid of **2NT** is conventional and must be **Alerted**. This signals the start to a bidding sequence that some find confusing. We will try to make it as simple as possible with explanation of the rationale behind each. But first consider the point that a 9-card fit and 25 PP should be a secure path to a game-level contract. The question should then be: *"Is there more?"*

Openers Rebid after Alerting Jacoby 2NT

The Opener will have one of four different types of hands and there are 3 choices of Rebids each shows the type of hand. You might consider the following, a decision tree; the opener starts with first option and works up the tree until finding the branch that fits the hand.

1) You have a second 5-Card suit – Bid this suit at the 4-level

A two suited hand, as this is, is generally a stronger than the HCP suggests. If the 2nd suit fits well with Partners hand or the indicated short suits suggested by the bid provide 'ruffing'¹ opportunities, i.e. elimination of liabilities, then responder has good info. Holding two 5-Card suits means there are only three cards left to distribute over the other two suits, which must be distributed 2-1, 1-2, 3-0 or 0-3. Notice that holding two 5-Card suits guarantees that you have either a Singleton or a Void - thus the hand has ruffing potential and has the extra Trump to do it. All these advantages is why we can bid the 2nd suit at the 4-level.

2) You have a Singleton or Void without a 2nd 5-Card suit – Bid this suit at the 3-level

You might be holding a 5-4-4-0 or a 5-4-3-1 distribution. Again the presence of the Void or Singleton sets up 'ruffing' opportunities and makes the combined hands stronger than HCP's or PP's might suggest. Partner should be told where where ruffs might occur. Bid the void/singleton at the 3-level.

3) You have neither of the above – Show Your Points

The method for showing your points follows a recognizable pattern. Starting from the biggest:

a) 19+ PP – Bid 4NT (i.e. Blackwood or RKC) you have a 9-Card fit and 31+ PP

b) 17-18 PP – Bid 3 of Trump Suit Tell your point range. If Partner has a minimum hand it's not quite enough for slam.

c) 15-16 PP – Bid 3NT note that this is effectively the range for opening 1NT an easy correspondence

d) 12-14 PP – Bid 4 of Trump Suit; Game You're saying you are minimum with no special shape.

In this sequence, jumping to Game as in the last option is not necessarily a shutout bid, the Responder has not yet shown a point count only that it is 13+.

1 Ruff is another term used to mean Trump

As Opener you have now completely (almost) described your hand, Responder is now in control and determines where the Partnership is going; she's the Captain. 3d suggests slam is not in the offing where as all the others might indicate a reason for further investigation. Responder needs to re-evaluate!

Responders Rebid

With so many possible rebids by Opener it is obvious that Responder's rebid is dependent on Opener's rebid.

If Partner has rebid 4NT he has retaken Captaincy and your job is simply to reply appropriately.

If Partner has rebid 3NT you should start a Control bidding sequence as a prelude to Blackwood (or RKC) or shut-out. Remember the caution that Control bids never go beyond Game-level Otherwise Responder either bids Game or Blackwood/RKC

If Partner has bid Game you need to have a very strong hand to consider doing anything other than Pass. Partner has said she has max 14 PP and no redeeming distributional features.

If Partner bids any other option; Reassess!! While these bids show hands that can 'play' stronger than their point count, you still don't know Partners point count. You need to assess how the distribution helps your hand; do opener's short suits cover your weak areas or do they have the potential to present overlapping values. Overlapping Values reduce the value of hands. What do we mean by overlapping values? An example might clarify. In a suit you hold A765 and Partner holds Q3. A total of 6 HCP but likely only 1 Trick for the offense and likely 1 Trick, possibly 2, for Defense. The Q, subject to capture by the K, is practically rendered useless. You might say well the Ace can then capture the King. Unless you have the J that doesn't save the Trick lost to the Defense by holding the A, K, and Q all fall on the same trick. When the dust settles you still have the Q's companion 3 to deal with.

If the reassessment indicates the possibility of Slam (few, if any overlapping values) you have two choices Bid 4NT asking for Aces (or Key Cards) or with the 3-level response (the strongest outside of 4NT response) Control bid before bidding 4NT. Why pass up the opportunity to learn as much about Partners hand when you have the bidding space?

Note: While not absolutely necessary, the Strong Jacoby Trump Raise, has it's most effectiveness when it is used in conjunction with Bergen raises and Splinters, and Jordan 2NT. Why?

Splinters can now be used to show Responder hands where Responder has a dim view of Slam potential e.g. 4-Card support, 10-12 PP with a singleton Ace. A situation where the use of Ace-Asking falls short. Splinter's being a two way process are a near necessary adjunct to Jacoby 2NT.

Bergen raises, and Splinters also promise 4-Card support so now a complete 9+ Trump bidding system is in place with these three Conventions. Bergen raises use up bidding space, making it difficult for Opponents to interfere, while not being very optimistic regarding Slam. Adding Jordan 2NT gives your side an effective counter when an opponent interferes with a Take-Out Double.

Some people, realizing that you might be on your way to Slam, like to throw in a bid after the 2NT (perhaps lead directing or just being nasty). We always want to be able counter the interference. σ is opponent's suit. If you were prepared to bid Jacoby 2N and opponent interferes:

Pass \rightarrow no A or K, no void or singleton in σ .

X \rightarrow A or K in the suit σ , but no void or singleton anywhere.

3NT \rightarrow singleton in the suit σ .

4 σ \rightarrow Void in the suit σ

4 of new suit → 2nd 5-Card suit, A or K in σ

4 of Original suit → sign-off; probably doubleton in σ and a weak hand

Jordan 2NT

Without interference Bergen raises, Splinters and Jacoby 2NT allows a versatile method of differentiating between 3 or 4-Card support and the 6-9, 10-12 and 13+ HCP ranges. When Partner opens in a Major and RHO Overcalls with a TOD your side can only now have a maximum of 28 (perhaps 29 or 30) HCP. Slam is not likely but Game is and you would still prefer to show Partner a limit raise without having to jump to 3-level if you can and with the possibility of further interference from the Advancer differentiate between 3 and 4-Card support. That's what Jordan 2NT allows you to do – it shows the limit-raise -- but now the limit raise might be relaxed such that you are only promising 3-Card support and 10+ HCP. Why the change? The 8-Card fit is the more important aspect for Game invitation while 4-Card support is more important to Slam aspirations Jordan 2NT; allows us to differentiate between 3 and 4-Card support with 10-12 HCP support. Once the TOD is made the 2NT by Responder changes from Jacoby to Jordan showing 4-Card support and 10+ HCP. To show 3-Card support and 10+ HCP one Redoubles (XX). These Partnership agreements allows Partners to specify the point ranges for Jordan 2NT and Redoubles: either 10-12 HCP or 10+ i.e. Limit+ raise.

Warning!!!

Whenever the Responder has a singleton or void it is advantageous, because tricks can be gained by using Dummy's shorter Trump suit to cover Declarer's losers. But when Declarer has a singleton there is a distinct possibility that the Dummy will have wasted values if the Dummy has any points other than those associated with the Ace or an A-K combination. This is one occasion where slams may be pursued after a splinter, the partner of of the splinter can quickly ascertain if there are wasted values in his hand. Let's however focus on the case where the opener reveals a singleton. It's simpler when the singleton is revealed by a 3-level bid, Responder knows where the singleton is and can immediately recognize wasted values. When the singleton is revealed by showing a second 5-card suit the responder has to guess where the potential singleton is. The only honor in the hand opposite the singleton has to be the Ace – otherwise the hand is devalued. Here's an example:

♠ AQxxx	♠ Kxxx
♥ 2	♥ Kx
♦ Axxx	♦ Qxx
♣ KJx	♣ AQx

The left hand starts the bidding: 1♠ – P – 2N! – P; 3♥! – P – 4♠ – P; P – P. After the Opener shows a Singleton in ♥'s the Responder's hand is devalued to 11 HCP, insufficient for Slam so Responder bids a suggestive close-out 4♠. Opener doesn't have any reason to go against Partner's suggestion, the contract is where it should be. ...And the 4-level could even be in trouble; not a good ending for a hand that started out with slam aspirations. We make note that the 2N and the 3 bid are Alert-able. In fact, every bid after the 2N bid is alert-able until either the game level bid or Ace-asking bid is made. And then the Ace-Asking bids are "Post-Alertable". Post Alert means that once the bidding is over the opponents need not ask what the specific responses meant, they should be told without asking.