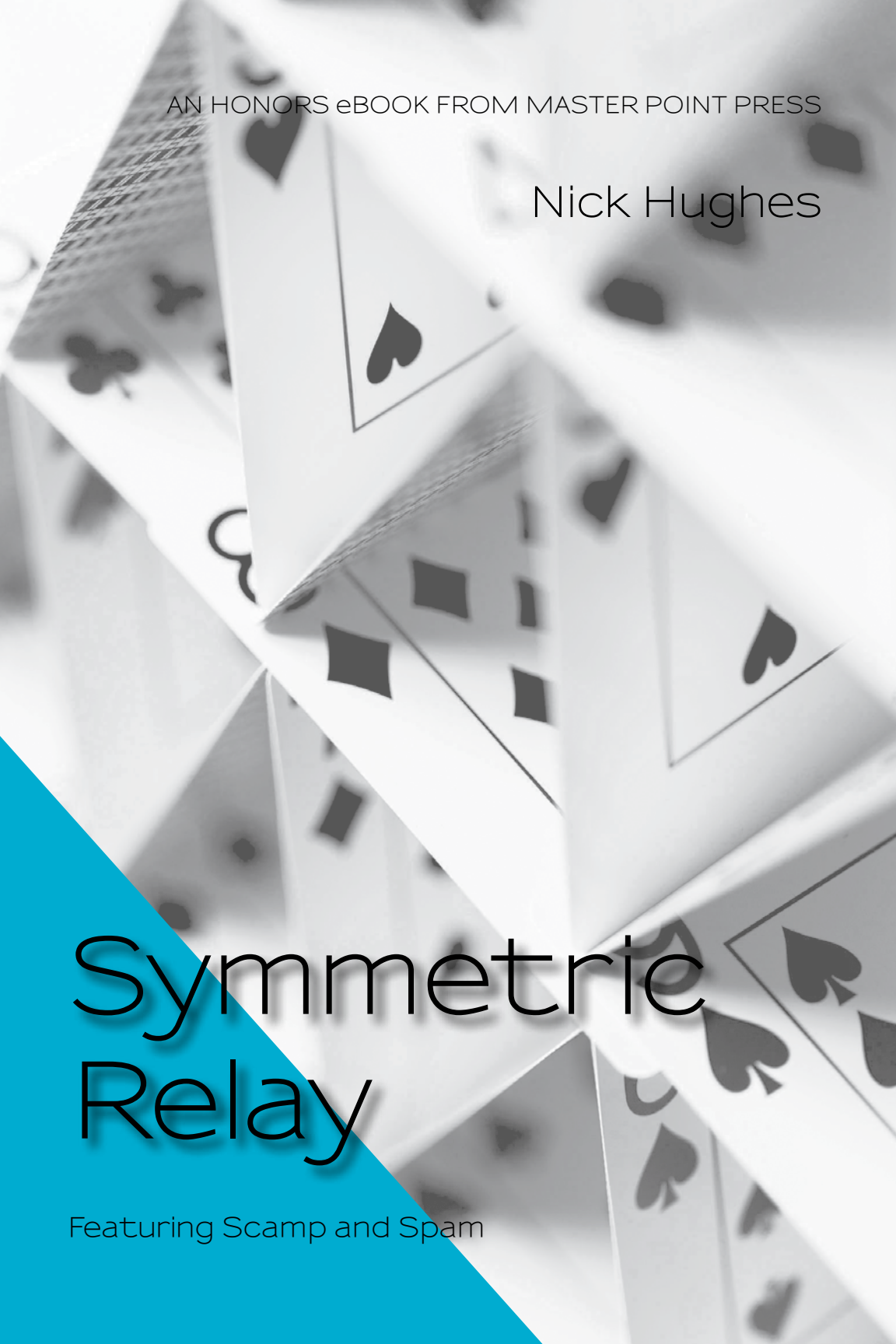




AN HONORS eBook FROM MASTER POINT PRESS

Nick Hughes

Symmetric Relay

Featuring Scamp and Spam

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First Section

Basic Stuff

The basic method, with reasons and examples

1 **Origins**

Why strong club – what is relay? – our method – gains and losses – mutterings

2 **Honeymoon**

Easing into relay – Honeymoon & its limitations

3 **The relay structure**

Hand types – core & residue – 1-suiters – canapé – 2-suiters – Roman hands – balanced hand structure

4 **Majors rule**

Soapbox – relay & 4-card majors – canapé & the 4-3 fit – the discomfort zone – 1♦, 1♥ & 1♠ openings

5 **Minors – leftovers**

1NT – 2 of a minor – higher openings

6 **The strong club**

Responses – flat hands – over the negative – chain breaks

7 **Relaying to slam**

Slam Points – Denial Cue Bidding – 13 hands

8 **After partner passes**

Third seat changes – passed hand responses

9 **Interference**

The Rule of 3 – ditching relay – TNT – high level Sputnik – we open 1♣ – F2NPR – choice of games

Chapter 1

Origins

Strong club systems are as old as contract bridge. The game's inventor devised the first strong club system, the *Vanderbilt Club*. There are many advantages.

When opener is strong, there is time and space to find a fit:

♠ A K 9 6 5	♠ 10 4
♥ K 9 4 3	♥ Q J 10 7 2
♦ A K 5	♦ 9 8 4
♣ 8	♣ 9 6 3
WEST	EAST
1♠	No

Rare but embarrassing. Strong clubbers will get to game after West opens 1♣. East will show a weak hand then bid a contented 2♥ over the 1♠ rebid.

Here is a more common mishap:

♠ J 7 6 5	♠ K 10 8
♥ K 8	♥ 10 4
♦ A K Q 10	♦ 6 2
♣ A Q 2	♣ K 10 6 5 4 3
WEST	EAST
1♦	1NT
3NT	No

A heart lead followed by a shoulder shrug. West was unlucky to hear 1NT but a 1♠ response would also lead to an ugly auction, with the wrong hand as dummy. Good systems strive to make the strong hand declare.

In a strong club system, other openings are limited – typically 11-15 pts – with many benefits.

Opener can compete freely with a limited hand, knowing responder won't get carried away.

A limited opening puts responder in the box seat:

♠ A 9	♠ 8 7
♥ K Q 10 6 3	♥ A J 5 4 2
♦ 8 5	♦ K 7 4 2
♣ J 10 5 3	♣ A 2

The strong club pair bid 1♥ : 4♥.

West had a routine opening in a strong club system and East sped to game as an each way bet, knowing slam was remote. Yet 4♠ is good for North-South, harder to reach after this *barrage*.

A limited opening helps responder do sums and stay low:

♠ A J 8 5 4	♠ 6
♥ 10 7 2	♥ Q 8 4 3
♦ A K 7 2	♦ 9 4 3
♣ 4	♣ A K 9 7 6

WEST	EAST
1♠	1NT
2♦	No

A dull hand for sure. Game is highly unlikely opposite 11-15 so East takes the low road. A Standard West could have a 17-count for 2♦, so East has to bid 2NT.

After going down in 2NT, East says to West "Have you heard of Gazilli?" That's one systemic hole plugged.

There are drawbacks.

A strong club can be derailed by a pesky preempt:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ K Q 9 7 4 3	1♣ ¹⁶⁺	2♥	No	4♥
♥ 4	?			
♦ A K 3				
♣ A J 2				

No choice. You bid 4♠ with fingers crossed, hoping to catch some support. The Standard bidders are laughing – they opened 1♠ then happily doubled 4♥, or bid 4♠ if they caught a raise.

Point taken but these awkward hands are not common and gains make up for some of those. Take this:

♠ A 6 3	♠ 7 2
♥ K Q 6 5	♥ A 10 8 3
♦ A 2	♦ 9 8 6 4
♣ A J 8 5	♣ Q 10 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♣ ¹⁶⁺	2♠	?

East made the normal takeout double opposite 16+ so they reached the making 4♥. At the other table, West's natural 1♣ opening didn't impress East and 2♠ was controversially passed out.

Sometimes the strong clubbers cope better with a high preempt. Take this, from an old World Championship:

♠ Q 9 7 6 4	♠ A K 8 5
♥ 9	♥ A Q 6
♦ A K 7	♦ 9 2
♣ A K 6 2	♣ J 9 8 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	4♥	4♠

What else? Now look at the strong clubbers:

1♣ ¹⁶⁺	4♥	Dbl
4♠		4NT
5♠		6♠

Strong club is the way to go – particularly if you add *relays* ...

What is a relay?

A relay is a bid that asks a question.

In relay auctions, one player describes shape and strength while partner repeatedly asks "What else do you have?"

Natural systems make some use of relays – Blackwood plus queen ask, Checkback. Stayman is a relay – responder asks via 2♣ to get opener to reveal shape.

A few pairs play *Relay Stayman*¹, where responder can keep asking to check for a second suit, perhaps revealing the entire shape.

¹ See *Chapter 18 – Arithmetic* for a possible structure.

This might be crucial:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1NT ¹⁵⁻¹⁷	2♣	♠ Q 5 2
2♠	?	♥ A K J 5
		♦ K Q 10 4
		♣ J 2

What now? 3NT is obvious if opener has strength in clubs:

♠ A K 4 3 ♥ Q 2 ♦ J 7 6 ♣ K Q 10 4

but if opener's minor is diamonds, you might belong in a suit:

♠ A K 4 3 ♥ Q 3 2 ♦ A 9 3 2 ♣ Q 4

Now 5♦ is safe enough, while the matchpoints go to those in four of a major. If we change the ♣Q to the ♣A, there are 12 easy tricks and 7♦ is a good spot.

A relay pair should have no problems reaching that 7♦. East would find out that partner had 4-3-4-2 shape, then locate all the key honours. Slams like this are routine for a competent relay pair.

System design

With relay systems, the cheapest response is often set aside as a relay. This has a BIG impact on the structure of opening bids.

If the 1♠ response to a 1♥ opening is an asking bid, it's clearly harder to find a spade fit. In many relay systems, the 1♥ opening **denies four spades**,² making a spade fit less likely, so losing the natural 1♠ response is less of an issue.

Our method

Most games are bid via relays. The relayer keeps making the cheapest bid to get partner to describe further. Here's a relay auction:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	EAST
♠ 6	1♥	1♠ ^R
♥ A Q 10 6 5	2♦	2♥ ^R
♦ K 6 4	2NT	3♣ ^R
♣ K 9 8 6	3♦	

2 **Transfer** openings avoid this issue – at a cost. See *Chapter 16*.

In our system – *Scamp*³ – 1♥ shows four or more and 11-15 pts. East's three bids are all relays, asking about shape. In response:

- 2♦ showed a club suit, as well as 5+ hearts
- 2NT showed a singleton or void spade
- 3♦ showed the complete shape: 1-5-3-4 in that order

All this is distinctly unnatural and off-putting. You might envisage having to memorise pages of artificial sequences to learn relay but that's not so. A few basic schemes cover everything.

In fact, relay systems are simpler than many of today's "natural" systems, weighed down as they are by an array of gadgets.

Relay structures are designed to unravel all shapes by 3NT. There are 300 hand patterns to be described, ignoring the 1% freaks, so the space needs to be used efficiently. Flick to *Chapter 3 – The Relay Structure* – to see how this is achieved.

Relay gains

Relays takes the guesswork out of many slams. Often the asker knows describer's exact shape, plus the honours in each suit:

♠ A K J 6 5	♠ Q 8 4 2
♥ A 7	♥ K 8
♦ A 9 4	♦ K 7 3 2
♣ Q J 10	♣ K 9 3

Slam has no play but it's cold if we move one of East's small cards to clubs. A relay pair would stop safely on these cards – ideally in 4NT – and easily bid slam opposite the hand with four clubs.

Relay methods can get the partnership to the best game on hands where natural bidders are forced to guess:

♠ A K 9	♠ J 7 5 4
♥ Q J 10 6	♥ K 3 2
♦ 7 5	♦ A 4
♣ A K 6 5	♣ Q 9 7 3

West discovered that partner held a positive with 4-3-2-4 in that order, then selected 4♥. Despite the diamond stopper, 3NT has little play while 4♥ is best of the rest. It's a grope in Standard or Precision.

3 Strong Club Accenting Majors. Yes, we had a dog called Scamp.

When the contract is normal, the defence can be testing if the asking hand remains hidden and unknown. Opening leads can be genuinely blind. You find yourself on lead against 3NT with

♠ 10 6 ♥ Q 6 5 4 ♦ Q 10 7 5 ♣ K 8 6

after dummy has shown 4-5-2-2 shape and declarer's hand is unknown. If you lead a diamond into declarer's ♦AKJ64, partner may not be amused. It's an ugly guess that you would not have to make against most opponents.

Having said all that, relay plays no role in the majority of auctions.

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♥	?	♠ 7 6 3
		♥ A 7
		♦ Q J 10 6 5 4
		♣ 7 5

In Standard, you respond 1NT to 1♥, hardly the ideal start. In relay systems, most strong hands go via relay so responder is free to bid 2♦ with this – long diamonds and around 6-10 pts, not forcing. Perfect.

Relay losses

There are hands where natural methods fare better, in main because relay sequences provide copious information on shape, but not texture.

You might bid the same way with ♠ A75432 as with ♠ KQJT32 and sometimes it's hard to find the stoppers for 3NT. There are solutions but they remain a concern.

Relay systems focus on games, slams and major fits, so sometimes we reach the wrong partscore. For instance:

♠ 7 4	♠ Q 8 3 2
♥ A K J 5	♥ 6 3
♦ K 9 4 3	♦ A 8 7 5 2
♣ 10 8 6	♣ Q 7

We would probably fail in 1NT here. Our West would open 1♥. East responds 1NT, because 1♠ would be relay and the diamond suit is too flimsy. Standard pairs reach 2♦ easily. Tough but rare.

The big losses occur when someone forgets the system. Sometimes there is no recovery ...

Who invented relay?

In Australasia, the early work was done by New Zealanders. In the 1970s, Roy Kerr – a mathematician – devised a *symmetric* shape-showing structure and the *Kiwi Club* was born. Paul Marston of *Moscito* fame designed systems using the method, with contributions from other leading NZ players.

Kerr did not invent relay. In America and Europe many top pairs had developed their own home-grown relay methods. The early American guru was Dave Cliff, whose work spawned systems like *The Ultimate Club*.

Kerr's main contribution was to impose symmetry, making relay more efficient and easier to learn.

Mutterings

Relay systems are unpopular with some writers and administrators. In Australia, former international Dick Cummings once headlined his column in the *Sydney Morning Herald* with "Let's Ban Relays". In many ACBL⁴ events you cannot play a full relay system, though that is changing.

Some reckon that such artificiality is against the spirit of the game. It offends that a less-talented pair might win with "underhand" methods.

Many older players would like to see bidding development halted at their comfort level. They have adopted transfer responses and tolerate Multi Twos, but relays are beyond the pale.

"Relay systems stunt the development of bidding judgement."

*"It's boring to play against a relay pair;
their bids mean nothing to you."*

Admittedly, it is dull to play against a slow relay pair, especially if they get their auctions wrong. You can't learn relay at the table. This means spending time bidding boards at home or on-line, or easing into relay by starting with *Honeymoon* ...

Crude and effective

W/Nil	♠ J 9 8 4 3		
	♥ 3 2		
	♦ 9 7 6 2		
	♣ J 9		
♠ Q 10 2		♠ 6	
♥ K J 6 5		♥ A Q 9 7 4	
♦ Q 4		♦ A 10 5 3	
♣ A 8 7 5		♣ 6 4 3	
	♠ A K 7 5		
	♥ 10 8		
	♦ K J 8		
	♣ K Q 10 2		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥ ⁴⁺	No	4♥	Dbl
No	4♠	Dbl	End

Our 1♥ opening shows 4+ and 11-15 points. Perhaps South should have passed 4♥ but East might have been a lot weaker. North could hardly sit.⁵

+500 for us with a quiet -140 in 3♥ from the other table.

Acol Two-ish

♠ A K 10 7 6	♠ Q 8 2
♥ 9	♥ 6 5 4 3
♦ A K 9	♦ 10 8
♣ K Q 6 2	♣ J 9 8 4
WEST	EAST
1♣ ¹⁶⁺	1♦ ⁰⁻⁷
1♠	2♠
4♠	

Having shown 0-7, East was happy enough to raise.

⁵ and avoid a red card lead !

Chapter 2

Honeymoon

To play a complete relay system, you need to learn a detailed structure of artificial bids. This is easier than it sounds but takes time. A good alternative in the early days is to play *Honeymoon*. You still use the relay concept but there is no artificial structure.

Sydney's Peter Buchen devised *Honeymoon Moscito*¹ with simplicity in mind. His aim was to allow a partnership to sit down, run through the opening bids and play some bridge. If they felt the urge, they could progress to full relay later.

Relays in Honeymoon

Responder starts relay by making the cheapest bid – the *step* – to show interest in game. In reply, opener shows shape with **natural** bids. Here are some Honeymoon auctions.

This is East's hand:

♠ K 6 5 ♥ K J 5 3 ♦ A 7 5 2 ♣ 9 6

WEST	EAST	
	1♥	4+ hearts, not four spades, 11-15pts ²
1♠ ^R	1NT	balanced
2♣ ^R	2♦	diamonds
2♥ ^R	2♠	three spades

West's bids are relays. East has bid naturally to show 3-4-4-2 in that order, by bidding features upwards.

If we move a club to hearts, we get:

	1♥	
1♠ ^R	2♦	& diamonds, 5-4 either way
2♥ ^R	2♠	three spades
2NT ^R	3♥	3-5-4-1 or similar

1 Based on the original opening bids of Paul Marston's Moscito system. See *Chapter 16 – Variations*.

2 Moscito actually uses a 15+ 1♣ and 10-14 openings

After a strong 1♣, opener is the one who does the asking.

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♣ ¹⁶⁺	1♠	♠ Q 10 7 5 2
1NT ^R	2♣	♥ K 5
2♦ ^R	2♠	♦ 7
2NT ^R	3♣	♣ A J 7 5 3

1♠ showed 4+ spades and 8+ points. East was then able to show 5-5 in the blacks by bidding both suits twice.³

Suits are shown up-the-line, irrespective of length, so East's 1♠ response denied four hearts. With five spades and four hearts, East would respond 1♥ then bid the spades twice.

Honeymoon relay guidelines

- Relaying is the only way to force. Other bids are non forcing.
- Two relays establish a game force.
- You get three shape relays, then it's suit-setting and cue bids.
- In competitive auctions, double is relay. Others are non-forcing.

Give it a go

Armed with these scant guidelines and the opening bids of Scamp, a pair can have a hit out at the local duplicate.

The relay is usually the next bid, but not always:

Openings	Relay
1♣ 16+ pts	— (1♦ = 0-7)
1♦ 4+ <u>spades</u>	1♥ (weak), 1♠ (strong)
1♥ 4+ hearts	1♠
1♠ both majors	2♣ (1NT is natural)
1NT balanced, no major	2♣
2♣ 5+ clubs, no major	2♦
2♦ 5+ diamonds, no major	2♥
2♥+ as you wish	

The limit openings show 11-15 pts. 1♦ and 1♥ deny four cards in the other major, 1NT and above deny a major. Over any of these openings, responder should relay with 11+ pts; all other responses are natural and non-forcing.

3 It would be nice to reveal the singleton diamond. See next chapter.

This is a good Honeymoon sequence:

♠ 9	♠ A 6 5
♥ K Q 10 6	♥ 5 3
♦ K J 10 5 4	♦ Q 7 3
♣ K 4 3	♣ A Q J 6 5
WEST	EAST
1♥	1♠ ^R
2♦	2♥ ^R
3♣	5♣

East is able to pinpoint partner's spade shortage and avoid 3NT. Take away the ♠A and East would respond 2♣ first time, showing five or more and around 6-10 pts.

You can sometimes stop low when responder is very weak:

♠ K J 10 5	♠ 9 4 2
♥ A Q	♥ K 8 6 3
♦ A J 5	♦ 9 8 4 2
♣ K Q 8 3	♣ 10 6
WEST	EAST
1♣ ¹⁶⁺	1♦ ⁰⁻⁷
1♥ ¹⁹⁺	1♠ ⁰⁻⁴
1NT	No

Problems with Honeymoon

- There are 300 hand patterns, excluding freaks. In a complete relay system, there is a unique sequence of bids to describe each shape. Honeymoon cannot deliver because no real attempt is made to use the bidding space effectively. There is often ambiguity about describer's shape.
- The best relay systems aim to make the stronger, unknown hand declare. For instance, the 1♥ response to a strong club should show a **spade** suit, so that the strong hand will declare a spade contract. In Honeymoon, the described hand declares too often.

Although complete relay auctions are often crucial, they are also rare – we average around four per session – so you won't be giving away much by sticking with *Honeymoon*.

In our view, you may as well learn the relay structure from Day One.

Don't dive in just yet

On the 80% of auctions with no relays, players with a grounding in 5-card Standard will need to make serious adjustments. Even Precision players will be at sea.

Welcome to the world of *canapé*,⁴ 4-3 fits, denied majors and negative free bids:

♠ A 9 3	♠ 10 5
♥ A 10 7 4	♥ 8
♦ —	♦ Q 10 8 7 4 2
♣ K Q 10 6 5 4	♣ A 9 7 3
WEST	EAST
1♥	2♦
3♣	4♣
5♣	

An unusual path to a normal spot. West's opening showed some 11-15 count with 4+ hearts, denying four spades.

Over partner's unwelcome non-forcing response, West showed a big *canapé* hand. Thoughtful evaluation then carried them to the good game.

Systems like Scamp require a new mind set. Skip to *Chapter 4 – Majors Rule* to get the feel for a modern 4-card major strong club system, or read on to get stuck into the relay structure.

Moscito

Moscito (Major Oriented Strong Club) is a related system. In some incarnations, it also uses the principle of the *denied major*. In original 1980s Moscito, 1♥ showed hearts and denied spades, 1♠ showed spades and denied hearts. The bid to show both majors was either 1♦ or 1NT, according to taste.

In the late 1990s, Paul Marston – who designed that system – switched to **transfer** openings. These days, most Moscito pairs prefer to open 1♦ with hearts and 1♥ with spades.

4 A method in which the shorter suit is sometimes bid first, like an entrée before the main course.

Chapter 3

The relay structure

Early relay systems were tough to learn.

Modern *symmetric* relay has changed that.

Take a common hand pattern like 5431. With a symmetric structure, all 24 *permutations* of this pattern are revealed with the same final bid – 3♦. If you pick up a 5431 hand and partner starts relay, you will bid 3♦ at some point to show that shape. The earlier responses name the suits, say which suit is longer and where the shortage is. (See the last page of the book)

Types of hand

For relay purposes, there are three types of hand:

1-suiters, 2-suiters and balanced hands

- 1-suiters have six or more in the long suit.¹
- 2-suiters have 5-4 shape or better. The genuine 3-suiters, which we call Roman, are included here.
- Balanced hands comprise 4432, 4333, all 5332s.

Core and Residue

A suit of 4+ cards is part of the *core* of the hand.

The shortish suits form the *residue*, what's left.

If you have six spades as the core of a 1-suited hand, the residue can be split in two ways:

6 - 3 3 1 or 6 - 3 2 2

There are three permutations of the first pattern:

6-1-3-3, 6-3-1-3, 6-3-3-1

We *resolve* the residue by looking at the short suits. The hand with a singleton heart has **high shortage** (HS) a shortage in the high-ranking side suit. The next hand has **middle** shortage (MS) and the third has **low** shortage (LS).

¹ Some relay methods treat 5332s as 1-suiters

Resolving 1-suiters

With a 1-suited hand (6+) show the suit then jump to 2♠ or higher if partner asks about shape.

The Scamp 1♦ opening shows spades. Responder bids 1♠ to relay. This is the 1-suited structure:

Asker	Describer	
	1♦	spades
1♠ ^R	2♠	1-suiter, high shortage
	2NT	" middle shortage
	3♣	" semi-balanced ("even")
	3♦	6-3-3-1 with low shortage
	3♥	7- <u>2</u> -3-1 " "
	3♠	7-3- <u>2</u> -1 " "
	3NT	7-3-3-0 ² " "

This table is one of about 10 that need to be learnt by rote.

One way to remember the order of shapes is to think of them as numbers. 7,231 is a smaller number than 7,321 and comes first. The bigger the number, the higher you bid.

With low shortage, you show the exact shape in one go – a direct 3♦ shows low (club) shortage and 6331. This is *zooming* – you zoom ahead to answer the next implied question.

Here's a 1♥ opening in Scamp:

♠ K 7 6 ♥ A J 7 5 4 3 ♦ 8 ♣ Q J 9

If partner relays with 1♠, jump to 2NT to show six hearts and a diamond shortage – diamonds being the middle side-suit. If partner asks again by bidding 3♣, complete shape-showing with 3♦:

WEST	EAST	
	1♥	
1♠ ^R	2NT	6+♥s, middle shortage
3♣ ^R	3♦	3-6-1-3

If you had a singleton spade instead, you would stop off at 2♠ (HS) before bidding 3♦. With 3-6-3-1, you would bid 3♦ directly. All 6331 hands end up at 3♦.³

² We don't cater for 8-card suits. Distort to a less extreme shape.

³ **Nearly** all. See *Chapter 6 – The Strong Club* for the exception.

Semi-balanced hands

1-suiters with 6-3-2-2 or 7-2-2-3 shape are semi-balanced. (Or even)

The bid to show an even hand is $3\clubsuit$. Half the time you stop off at $2\spadesuit$ along the way to show "relatively" high shortage.

Bid $2\spadesuit$ first with 6-2-2-3 & 6-2-3-2.

Asker	Describer	
....	$2\spadesuit$	high shortage
$2NT^R$	$3\clubsuit$	even; then
$3\diamond^R$	$3\heartsuit$	6-2-2-3 (high-middle)
	$3\spadesuit$	6-2-3-2 (high-low)

With the other two shapes, bid $3\clubsuit$ directly then split them if partner asks. (6322, the smaller number, comes before 7222)

Here is a chart with every shape in the 1-suited structure:
(with 6+♥s in this case)

2♠	HS					
2NT	MS					
3♣	even					
3♦	3-6-3-1		3-6-1-3	1-6-3-3		
3♥	2-7-3-1	3-6-2-2	2-7-1-3	1-7-2-3	2-6-2-3	
3♠	3-7-2-1	2-7-2-2	3-7-1-2	1-7-3-2	2-6-3-2	
3NT	3-7-3-0		3-7-0-3	0-7-3-3		

In resolving shortages, the order is always the same:

high – middle – low

If you bid $2NT$ to show middle shortage, it will always be a singleton or void. High shortage could be a doubleton if semi-balanced.

Some examples

Responder bids $1\spadesuit$ over a $1\diamond$ (spades) or $1\heartsuit$ opening to ask about shape.⁴ Opener then jumps to $2\spadesuit$ or higher with a 1-suiter:

$\spadesuit$ 8	$\heartsuit$ A J 9 7 5 4	$\diamond$ 8 7 4	$\clubsuit$ A Q 5
	$1\heartsuit$		
$1\spadesuit^R$	$2\spadesuit$	6+♥s, high shortage	
$2NT^R$	$3\diamond$	1-6-3-3	

⁴ Works the same if you if you open $1\diamond$ with hearts and $1\heartsuit$ with spades.

♠ 4 3 ♥ Q 10 8 7 6 5 ♦ A J 6 ♣ A 3

	1♥	
1♠ ^R	2♠	6+♥s, HS
2NT ^R	3♣	even
3♦ ^R	3♠	2-6-3-2 (high-low)

♠ A Q 10 5 4 3 2 ♥ 6 5 ♦ Q J 3 ♣ K

	1♦	spades
1♠ ^R	3♥	7-2-3-1 (2-3 comes before 3-2) ⁵

♠ K Q J 8 6 5 4 ♥ A 4 3 ♦ — ♣ 8 6 3

	1♦	spades
1♠ ^R	2NT	6+♠s, MS
3♣ ^R	3NT	7-3-0-3

In most strong club systems, the 2♣ opening is natural and often denies a 4-card major. The 1-suited structure works the same way.

♠ Q 8 ♥ A 4 ♦ A 8 ♣ K 10 9 6 5 4 3

	2♣	5+ clubs, no major
2♦ ^R	3♣	semi-balanced
3♦ ^R	3♠	2-2-2-7

Canapé

For most people, opening 1♥ and rebidding 2♦ shows a hand with more hearts than diamonds, or maybe 5-5.

In the 1940s, Frenchman Pierre Albarran devised *canapé*, a method that often requires the shorter suit to be bid first. Playing canapé, the usual opening bid on a hand with four hearts and five diamonds is 1♥.

In Scamp, you always show the **higher-ranking** suit first, irrespective of length. For instance, if partner opens a strong 1♣ and you have a positive with the majors, you show spades first, even on a hand with six hearts. (Opposite of *Honeymoon*)

5 Some pairs don't split 2-3 from 3-2, bidding 3♥ with both of them.

Two Suiters

This is the way we show a second suit after a 1♦ (spades) or 1♥ opening, both of which deny four cards in the other major:

1♠ ^R	1♥	hearts
	1NT	& diamonds, not balanced
	2♣	balanced
	2♦	& clubs, with 5+♥s
	2♥	& clubs, canapé
	2♠+	1-suiter (6+)

These are the stages in describing a 2-suiter:

- name the suits
- say whether the second (lower-ranking) suit is longer
- show the shortage
- resolve the shape

If the first suit is longer, zoom to say where the shortage is.
With low shortage, zoom to complete resolution, as per usual.

Here is the 2-suited structure, common to all openings:

....	2♦	Roman (3-suited)
	2♥	canapé (second suit longer)
	2♠	5-5 or better
	2NT	high shortage ⁶
	3♣	5422 "even"
	3♦	LS, 5431
	3♥	LS, 6421
	3♠	LS, 6430
	3NT	LS, 7411 ⁷
	4♣	LS, 7420

The shortage order is "hellish": **high - even - low resolving**

For us, "canapé" means that the second (lower-ranking) suit is longer. (Another term for canapé is *reverser*)

The structure is symmetric. All canapé hands go via 2♥ before resolving; all 6421 hands "come out" at 3♥ etc.

6 Careful. With 1-suiters, 2♠ shows high shortage. With 2-suiters, it's 2NT.

7 7411s have high and low shortage, so you can either show them directly or via 2NT high shortage. We go directly with minimums, via 2NT with maximums.

Take the 5431 hands with red suits. Open 1♥, then rebid 1NT over partner's 1♠ relay to show diamonds. The four permutations are shown like this:

3-5-4-1	1NT – 2♣ ^R – 3♦ (LS, zooming to shape)
1-5-4-3	1NT – 2♣ ^R – 2NT (HS) – 3♣ ^R – 3♦
3-4-5-1	1NT – 2♣ ^R – 2♥ (canapé) – 2♠ ^R – 3♦
1-4-5-3	1NT – 2♣ ^R – 2♥ – 2♠ ^R – 2NT – 3♣ ^R – 3♦

5-5 hands

The 5-5 hands and 3-suiters have their own structures.

Having shown two suits, the bid to show 5-5 or better is 2♠.

For instance, with 5-5 in the majors:

....	2♠	5-5, then
2NT ^R	3♣	high shortage
	3♦	even (5- <u>6</u> -1-1 / <u>6</u> -5-1-1) canapé first !
	3♥	LS, 5-5-2-1
	3♠	5-5-3-0
	3NT	5-6-2-0 canapé first
	4♣	6-5-2-0

The structure follows the hellish pattern: high shortage – even – low shortage resolving. In this case, maybe don't bother memorising the actual bids, just the order of the hand patterns.

Roman Hands⁸

With a 3-suiter, show two suits then bid 2♦ to show a Roman hand.

This is how it works, again with spades & hearts as the two suits:

....	2♦	Roman, then
2♥ ^R	2♠	high third suit (diamonds in this case)
	2NT	low suit, 4-4-1-4
	3♣	4-4-0- <u>5</u> canapé first
	3♦	4- <u>5</u> -0-4
	3♥	<u>5</u> -4-0-4

Since the 1♦ (spades) and 1♥ openings deny length in the other major, the third suit is already known to be clubs. After those openings, go straight into full resolution.

⁸ Roman = 4441 or 5440, as in Roman Club, a 1960s system.

Two-suiter examples

Show the second suit – say whether canapé or not – which shortage – resolve.

♠ K 7 ♥ K Q J 6 5 4 ♦ A 9 7 6 ♣ J

	1♥	<i>hearts, not spades</i>
1♠ ^R	1NT	& diamonds
2♣ ^R	3♥	2-6-4-1 (zoom with low shortage)

♠ Q 7 6 4 ♥ A 4 ♦ 6 5 ♣ K J 10 5 4

	1♦	<i>spades, not hearts</i>
1♠ ^R	2♥	& clubs, canapé
2♣ ^R	3♣	4-2-2-5

♠ 6 ♥ Q J 9 5 ♦ A Q 10 6 4 ♣ A 7 3

	1♥	
1♠ ^R	1NT	& diamonds
2♣ ^R	2♥	canapé
2♠ ^R	2NT	high shortage
3♣ ^R	3♦	1-4-5-3

♠ 4 ♥ K Q 10 6 5 ♦ Q 5 ♣ A J 6 5 4

	1♥	
1♠ ^R	2♦	& clubs, with 5+♥s
2♥ ^R	2♠	5-5
2NT ^R	3♣	high shortage
3♦ ^R	3♥	1-5-2-5

♠ K 10 5 4 ♥ 6 ♦ A J 5 4 ♣ Q 10 4 3

	1♦	<i>spades, not hearts</i>
1♠ ^R	1NT	diamonds
2♣ ^R	2♦	Roman (so clubs is the third suit)
2♥ ^R	2♠	4-1-4-4

Balanced hands

48% of hands are classically balanced. The bid to show a balanced hand is usually 2♣. The aim is to increase the chance that the known hand winds up as dummy. In simple Precision, responder to 1♣ bids 1NT to show a flat hand – not so great since the strong hand will be dummy in 3NT.

We use these terms for balanced patterns:

<i>balanced</i>	includes all 5332s
<i>flat</i>	4432 or 4333 (no 5-card suit)
<i>square</i>	4333

There are three similar structures, according to the opening.⁹

The structures have these features in common:

- 5332s come first
- then the 4432s, resolving with clubs
- tack the square hands on the end

Balanced hands after a 1♦ or 1♥ opening

The same structure is used over both of them:

	1♥			
1♠ ^R	2♣	<i>balanced</i>		
2♦ ^R	2♥	five hearts		
	2♠	& diamonds		
	2NT	<u>2</u> -4-3-4		<u>2</u> -5-3-3 (HS)
	3♣	3-4- <u>2</u> -4	<u>2</u> -4-4-3	3-5- <u>2</u> -3 (MS)
	3♦	3-4-3-3	3-4-4- <u>2</u>	3-5-3- <u>2</u> (LS)

Likewise after a 1♦ opening. All the streams end by 3♦.

5332s are resolved by shortage in the usual order.

With balanced hands, it doesn't help much to associate a shape with a bid, because the structure is not symmetric. Instead, we find this mnemonic helpful:

“5 cards, diamonds, clubs-high, clubs-low, square”.

Diamonds, the higher ranking minor, comes first.

⁹ In the wider relay world, balanced structures vary quite a bit.

1NT Opening

Our 1NT opening shows 12-15 balanced, no four card major.

We sometimes open 1NT with 5+4 minors, when the long minor is weak. Could have a stiff major honour. For relay purposes, these extra shapes are tacked to the end of the relevant 5-card minor.

This is the relay structure over 1NT:

	1NT	
2 $\clubsuit$ ^R	2 $\diamond$	five diamonds
	2 $\heartsuit$	five clubs
	2 $\spadesuit$	<u>2</u> -3-4-4
	2NT	3- <u>2</u> -4-4
	3 $\clubsuit$	3-3- <u>4</u> -3
	3 $\diamond$	3-3-3- <u>4</u>
	3 $\heartsuit$	1-3-5-4 (HS)
	3 $\spadesuit$	3-1-5-4

"5 $\diamond$ s, 5 $\clubsuit$ s, both-high, both-low, square $\diamond$ s, square $\clubsuit$ s"

Balanced hand examples

$\spadesuit$ K 10 5 4 3 $\heartsuit$ A J 7 $\diamond$ 4 3 $\clubsuit$ A Q 3

	1 $\diamond$	<i>spades</i>
1 $\spadesuit$ ^R	2 $\clubsuit$	balanced
2 $\diamond$ ^R	2 $\heartsuit$	5 $\clubsuit$ s
2 $\spadesuit$ ^R	3 $\clubsuit$	5-3- <u>2</u> -3 (MS)

$\spadesuit$ Q 5 $\heartsuit$ K 10 4 3 $\diamond$ A Q 5 4 $\clubsuit$ Q 4 3

	1 $\heartsuit$	
1 $\spadesuit$ ^R	2 $\clubsuit$	balanced
2 $\diamond$ ^R	2 $\spadesuit$	diamonds
2NT	3 $\clubsuit$	<u>2</u> -4-4-3 (HS)

$\spadesuit$ K 6 3 $\heartsuit$ A 5 4 $\diamond$ A J 4 3 $\clubsuit$ Q 3 2

	1NT	<i>balanced, no major</i>
2 $\clubsuit$ ^R	3 $\clubsuit$	3-3-4-3

♠ K ♥ A 5 4 ♦ A 9 5 4 3 ♣ K 8 3 2

	1NT ¹⁰	"balanced", no major
2♣ ^R	2♦	5 diamonds
2♥	3♥	1-3-5-4

Practice

There you have it. After you learn these structures you can describe 300 hand patterns. Okay, there is a bit left – shape-showing is a bit different after a 1♣ opening. See *Chapter 6*.

All these structures need to be learnt by rote. Try bidding plenty of hands at home, ideally generated by a computer program like *BGen* or *Borel*. Or set up bidding practice at *Bridge Base Online*.

A worked example

Here's a complete relay auction through the eyes of the asker:

♠ A K 5 4 3	♠ 8
♥ 10 2	♥ A Q J 9 5 3
♦ A J 9 3	♦ K 7
♣ K 7	♣ Q 10 5 3

WEST	EAST
	1♥ hearts, 11-15 pts
1♠ ^R	2♦ & clubs, with 5+♥s

West starts relay and finds opener with clubs as well. 3NT looks best but there's no hurry.

2♥ ^R	2NT high shortage
-----------------	-------------------

Spades are out, as we half-expected. Check for six hearts:

3♣ ^R	3♥ 1-6-2-4
-----------------	------------

There's no reason to reject the 8-card fit. Slam is a chance opposite good hearts and the ♣A so West might continue relay, asking about strength and specific honours. That comes in *Chapter 7 – Relaying to Slam*. For now,

4♥	No
----	----

¹⁰ Rare but better than the alternative – 2♦ – with that poor suit.

Chapter 4

Majors rule

Let's start with a cold fact. Over a third¹ of hands contain a major of four cards – not five. These are the ones that 5-card major systems off-load to the minor openings and 1NT.

Majors demand a more urgent treatment.

Soapbox

If your policy is to wait for five cards before you'll open a major, you will miss some fits. When the opponents intervene, the trusty negative double might not save you:

♠ K Q 7 6	♠ A J 10 5 3
♥ 10 5	♥ 9 2
♦ A K 9 6 5 3	♦ Q 4
♣ 8	♣ J 7 6 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦*	4♥	No	No
No			

* Standard methods

Another double game swing. Someone might have acted over 4♥ but it's not clear. Examples like this abound – where system requires opener to conceal a major, leaving responder to grope for the missed fit.

♠ A K 9 4	♠ Q 7 5 3
♥ 8 6 5	♥ 9 7
♦ K 6	♦ 9 8 3
♣ A 7 3 2	♣ K 10 6 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	2♥	End	

1 37% if I pressed the right buttons.

East-West have no safe way to contest the partscore. The primary aim of a modern, aggressive system should be to find a major fit quickly – why make it so hard?

Relay and 4-card majors

This chapter is not a diatribe against 5-card majors. If you play a so-called natural system, your choice in this area is not crucial.

It's different with strong club systems. If you combine a forcing 1♣ with 5-card majors, you throw a pile of unrelated hands into the catch-all 1♦ opening. The bid becomes meaningless – minor fits will slip by; notrumps are a worry; responder has to work hard to bring back the majors. Such is the case with modern Precision, or Polish Club with its nebulous 1♣.

Relay bidders have another potent reason for preferring 4-card majors – space. If the catch-all opening is overloaded, it's awkward to devise a relay structure that will unravel shapes at a reasonable level. (See *Chapter 18 – Arithmetic*)

Scamp (Strong Club Accenting Majors)

Scamp goes further by using three openings to show the hands with 11-15 points and major length:

- 1♦ shows 4+ spades & denies 4 hearts
- 1♥ shows 4+ hearts & denies 4 spades
- 1♠ shows both majors

Suit quality is irrelevant. Flat hands are fine, the shown suit need not be the longest – canapé. The two West hands at the start of the chapter are 1♦ openings in Scamp.

The **denied major** gives responder useful information. It's often possible to divine the opponents' major fit:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♥	?	♠ 7 6
		♥ K 10 4 3
		♦ K J 9 4
		♣ 10 3 2

East knows that the opponents have at least eight spades and has a licence to keep them in the dark. A raise to 3♥ is in order – more of that in *Chapter 11 – Raises*.

Canapé and the 4-3 fit

Albarran developed canapé partly to avoid the need to introduce 4-card suits at a high level.

♠ 6 ♥ AQ75 ♦ AQJ754 ♣ 76

This hand is content at the 1-level in hearts and the 3-level in diamonds. The diamonds can wait, so the idea is to open 1♥ and rebid 3♦, showing each suit at its preferred level. If you start with diamonds, the hearts can miss out.

The method was incorporated into Italian systems, such as Blue Club. Playing canapé, a hand like the following is easy:

♠ 43 ♥ AQ96 ♦ AK1065 ♣ 54

Blue Clubbers would open 1♥ with these cards then *canapé* into 2♦ over a response of 1♠ or 1NT. That sequence suggests 4-5 and works nicely here.

However, it's not so good with the red suits swapped:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	EAST
♠ 43	1♥	1NT
♥ AK1065	?	
♦ AQ96		
♣ 54		

If you rebid 2♦ under canapé, responder will sometimes pass with doubletons in the red suits. You could be playing in a "break", not a fit. If you rebid 2♥ you might catch a singleton, yet passing 1NT could miss a 5-3 heart fit. Hmm.

The modern style is to solve this problem from the other side of the table, by requiring responder to **raise on three** most of the time. Then opener can pass 1NT in some comfort with these cards.

Raising partner – the discomfort zone

The Law of Total Tricks suggests that we are safe at the 2-level with eight trumps. We like to bid beyond our safe level at times, to solve opener's rebid problem and keep the opponents guessing. The side to display fit first has the advantage. For instance:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♥	?	♠ A10 8 6
		♥ K 9 4
		♦ 6 5
		♣ Q10 8 5

2♥ is automatic but it will often be a 4-3 fit – a 1♥ opening is based on a 4-card suit around half the time. 2♥ might be shaky opposite ♥J-8-5-3 but it's more likely to be a decent spot, or the right springboard towards game.

We routinely raise on three, unless the hand is notrumpy. By doing so, we deprive the opponents of their usual assumptions about fit. If you mix it up a bit, you increase the chance that the other side will be stepping into a misfit:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	SOUTH'S HAND
1♥	No	2♥	?	♠ A J 8 7 5
				♥ K 6 5
				♦ A 6 2
				♣ 9 3

Hard not to bid 2♠, hoping for a heart shortage in dummy or a heart lead. You try that but West leads a club and dummy tracks with 2-3-4-4. Nothing makes either way. Unlucky!

1♥ Opening

This shows hearts and denies spades, 11-15 pts. We pass dull, flat 11-counts but a 5-4 10-count with decent suits is worth opening. Bergen fans can apply the Rule of **good** 19, with adjustments for suit quality:

♠ A 9 4 ♥ K 10 8 7 ♦ 6 ♣ K 10 8 6 5

Worth a go with 19 *Opening Points*. Decent suits, control-rich and happy enough with a heart lead or raise.

However:

♠ Q 7 ♥ A J 7 5 4 ♦ J 7 6 ♣ K 7 3

Pass – not close for us. No intermediates, hate those flying quacks and A-J-empty is an ugly suit.

Responder relays with 1♠ on most strong hands, nominally 11+. Other responses are not forcing, around 6-10 pts. 2NT and above can show fit if you wish. (See *Chapter 11 – Raises*)

1♥	Pass	up to a dull 8-count
1♠	Relay, 11+	
1NT	natural, (6) 7-10 pts, could have spades, unlikely to have three hearts	
2♣/♦	5+ cards, around 6-10 pts ²	
2♥	(6)7-10 Total Points, 3 or 4 trumps prefer 8-10 if 3-card support	
2♠	6-card suit, 6-10 pts	
3♣/♦	you choose; 6+ cards invitational for us	
3♥	shapely raise to 2♥, so a "mixed" raise	

Here is the relay structure, repeated from the previous chapter:

1♥	
1♠ ^R	1NT & diamonds, not balanced
	2♣ balanced (includes 5332)
	2♦ & clubs, not canapé
	2♥ & clubs, canapé
	2♠+ 1-suiter (6+)

You need to remember that 1NT shows diamonds and the club hands are split.

To relay twice is *3N-forcing*. This basically means game-forcing, though the auction can occasionally die in four of a minor.

Requiring 11+ to start relay runs the risk of missing the occasional 25-point game with 15 opposite 10. This prudent approach is advisable. Routine relays with 10-counts will send you overboard. To avoid this, opener can raise a 1NT response with a tip-top maximum so you shouldn't miss out³.

² Some relay pairs use **transfer responses**, with 2♦ as a good 3-card raise.

³ Flat 15-counts are dangerous. It might go 1NT¹⁵⁻¹⁷ – 3NT at other tables.

With around 11-12, relay once then *break* to invite game:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♥	1♠ ^R	♠ Q 7 6
2♣ ^{bal}	?	♥ A 9 5 4
		♦ K J 3 2
		♣ 6 5

Bid 2♥ to show a dull limit raise in Standard, sometimes shapely 3-card support.

It's pleasant to be able to stop at the 2-level. However, if opener had rebid 2♦ (clubs), you would have to bid 3♥ to show this since 2♥ would be relay. With a more shapely 4-card raise, use a gadget like our 2NT limit+ raise. (*Chapter 11* again)

New suit bids are constructive, not weak sign-offs. They could be shaded on hands with a stiff heart, when it might be unwise to pass 1♥. Game is possible if opener has a good hand with a fit:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♥	?	♠ A 6 5
		♥ 6 5
		♦ 10 6
		♣ K J 9 6 5 4

Ideal for 2♣. Bids like this are nice earners – you show values, direct the lead and occasionally reach a cold 22-point 3NT. Opener will sometimes pass with a singleton, so the suit needs to be up to scratch.

It's great not to have to bid 1NT on these cards. This in turn means that the 1NT response is more descriptive – shortish hearts, otherwise balanced-ish.

1NT is also needed to cater for some hands with five spades:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♥	?	♠ K 8 7 4 3
		♥ 6
		♦ A 4 3
		♣ Q 9 3 2

1NT – no second choice. 1♠ shows 11+ any and it's folly to bid 2♠ on a suit like this. Remember to alert 1NT. "Natural, 6-10. Could have spades."

Relay with most 11+. Even so, it can be better to make a calculated underbid on some marginal hands:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♥	?	♠ A 7
		♥ 6
		♦ K 9 8 7 4 3
		♣ K J 7 6

Relaying with 1♠ is okay but a non-forcing 2♦ will work better. The stiff heart and short spades swing it. Opener will bid again with many maximums so you won't miss game. If you relay instead, 2NT or higher from opener would be embarrassing. 2♦ also gains in competitive auctions – whenever the next player is about to bid 2♠.

Opener's Rebid

New suit bids by opener tend to be canapé, discouraging preference. Jumps show shapely maximums.

	1♥	
1NT	2♣/♦	5-4 either way, canapé more likely
	2♥	strongly suggests six
	2♠	as you wish ⁴
	2NT	good 15-count (rare, only if vul at IMPs)
	3♣/♦	good canapé, 4-6
	3♥	good max, 6 hearts

With five hearts and a 4-card minor, it is sometimes better to take your chances as dummy. Tend to pass with doubletons outside but remove with a singleton:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	EAST
♠ Q 4 3	1♥	1NT
♥ A 9 6 5 4	?	
♦ 8		
♣ A K 10 3		

2♣, too early to bail. This is obvious in Standard but unclear in Scamp because responder might pass 2♣ with doubletons in your suits. Here the stiff diamond and good clubs suggest 2♣ will be

4 See Chapter 12 – *Style Counsel* for our suggestion.

better – partner rates to have 3 or 4 of them. If not, you might be able to scramble to 2♥ or even 2♠. For instance, partner might have this:

♠ A 9 8 2 ♥ K 7 ♦ Q 9 6 4 2 ♣ 9 3

bidding 2♦ over your 2♣ to search for a 7-card fit.

Similar principles apply over a suit bid by responder. Opener's new suits are definitely canapé, 2NT and jumps suggest a partial fit:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	EAST
♠ A 4	1♥	2♣
♥ A K 9 6 5 4	?	
♦ 8 4		
♣ K 10 3		

Worth 3♥ because of the fit. You could try 2♠ – the denied major – with a sensitive partner.

1♦ opening

This shows spades and denies four hearts, 10-15 points. Maybe apply a Bergen-style Rule of good 18. We widen the range because the low start leaves room for two “relays”.

1♠ is a *strong relay*, typically 13+. Opener shows shape in the usual manner. (1NT = diamonds, etc)

1♥ is a *range probe*, usually 10-12 pts, sometimes less. Opener rebids 1♠ over this with any minimum; other rebids are natural, good hands.

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♦	?	♠ 9
		♥ A 8 7 5 4
		♦ K 10 7 6 5
		♣ 8 7

2♦ or 2♥ would show a better suit and 1NT has low appeal, so use the range probe. It's like the forcing ntrump in a 5-card major system and caters for three hand types:

- most 10-12 counts, to allow accurate invitations
- weakish hands with some spades. Hands that don't want to pass 1♦, wrong strength or shape for 2♠
- 6-10 counts unsuited to anything else, often 2-suited

(For more on the range probe, see *Chapter 12 – Style Counsel*)

You can pass 1♦ on a weak hand with short spades, or a fair hand with diamond length.⁵

Compared to the 1♥ opening, there are some small adjustments to the natural auctions. For a start, responding 10-counts can go either way.

A 1NT response suggests 3+ cards in the side suits, since the range probe can be used on hands like the one above. This allows the 1♦ opener to bid a 4-card minor freely over a 1NT response, confident of catching at least 3-card support.

1♠ opening

This shows both majors and 11-15 points.

♠ A1076 ♥ A Q95 ♦ 76 ♣ Q65

Great to nail that major fit straight away.

Over 1♠ and higher, there is less space to unravel shape, so these openings can't hold a lot of hand patterns.

2♣ is the relay. Other responses follow the usual style.

1♠	1NT	(6) 7-10, semi-forcing
	2♣	relay, 11+
	2♦/3♣	mildly constructive
	2♥	weakish, say 5-10 TP
	2♠	(6) 7-10 TP, 3-4 trumps
	2NT	as you wish ⁶
	3♥/♠	shapely mixed raises

The 2♥ "raise" could be shaded but don't push it; better to pass 1♠ with a weak hand.

The 1NT response will nearly always be balanced-ish, so opener can remove to a 5-card major, confident of at least a 5-2 fit. This means that responder with 3-3 majors can afford to bid 1NT rather than guess well.

5 Partner should alert. "Neither 1♥ nor 1♠ would be natural"

6 Chapter 11 again. We use 2NT to show a limit+ heart raise.

Opener can raise 1NT with a vulnerable 15-count; or bid a minor fragment:

♠ Q 8 6 5 4	♠ 9 3
♥ AK 8 3	♥ 6 2
♦ Q 7 5	♦ K 10 9 8 6
♣ Q	♣ A J 4 2

WEST	EAST
1♠	1NT
2♦	No

The field found that the 5-2 spade fit did not go well, after most Wests removed 1NT to 2♥. Our West bid features upwards for a happy outcome. (After 1♠ : 1NT : 2♣, responder can bid 2♦ as a sort of "relay" for opener's long suit)

On hands with a stiff spade, responder should do something else, since 1NT could beget 2♠.

This is the relay structure:

	1♠	majors
2♣ ^R	2♦	flat or Roman
	2♥	canapé (longer hearts) ⁷
	2♠	5-5 or better

So the 2-suiters come out square, retaining symmetry. The other hands are resolved in the expected manner:

	1♠	majors
2♣ ^R	2♦	flat or Roman
2♥ ^R	2♠	flat (4-4-2-3 / 4-4-3-2)
	2NT	Roman with diamonds
	3♣	4-4-1-4
	3♦	4-4-0-5 (canapé first)
	3♥	4-5-0-4
	3♠	5-4-0-4

Here are some major hands from play:

⁷ A reminder that – for us – *canapé* actually means "lower ranking suit longer".

Concealing shape

♠ K J 4 2	♠ A 8
♥ 7 5	♥ Q 9 6 4
♦ A Q 5 4	♦ K J 7 6
♣ K 4 3	♣ A 8 2

WEST	EAST	
	1♥	
1♠ ^R	2♣	balanced
3NT	No	

Such a simple hand. A club was led at the other table – one off when the spade finesse failed.

This uninformative auction is common for us and a big winner. Our North led a spade. North's hand:

♠ Q 10 6 3 ♥ K 10 8 ♦ 10 3 2 ♣ J 9 5

Locating their 9-card fit

♠ A K J	♠ Q 6 3
♥ A Q 4	♥ K 6 5 3
♦ J 9 5 4 2	♦ K Q 7 6
♣ 7 6	♣ A 2

WEST	EAST	
	1♥	
1♠ ^R	2♣	balanced
2♦ ^R	2♠	& diamonds
2NT ^R	3♦	3-4-4-2
4♥ !?		

4♥ rather than 5♦ was an attempt to paint the lily⁸, since many tables were failing in 3NT. Hearts were 4-2 but diamonds were 2-2 so it was all very good.

West might have been hoping that partner held something like:

♠ Q 6 3 ♥ K 10 6 5 ♦ K Q 7 6 ♣ Q 2

when 4♥ is the only game with a chance.

8 Or *gild refined gold*, if you prefer. Not one of his better lines.

4th suit not forcing

♠ AK 7 2	♠ 6 5
♥ 10 4 2	♥ Q 9 8 5 3
♦ K J 10 5 4	♦ 3
♣ 4	♣ K Q 10 8 6

WEST	EAST
1♦ ^{spades}	2♣ !
2♦	2♥
No	

East might have tried 1♥ – the range probe – but 2♣ was okay with that disparity, given that opener has denied four hearts. When West suggested 5-1 in the minors, East scrambled to a safe landing. 4SF only applies to invitational-plus auctions.

Distortion declined

It's tempting for opener to treat four small major cards as a 3-card suit, prepared to do some creative sorting if partner relays. We have found that honesty is the better policy:

E/EW	♠ —		
	♥ Q 10 9 5 3		
	♦ A 9 6 2		
	♣ Q 6 3 2		
♠ AK Q 9 7		♠ J 10 6 4	
♥ 4		♥ 6 2	
♦ K 10 7 4 3		♦ Q 5	
♣ 8 7		♣ K J 10 9 5	
	♠ 8 5 3 2		
	♥ AK J 8 7		
	♦ J 8		
	♣ A 4		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
No	4♥	End	1♠ ^{majors}

We hoped for a double game swing, though 5♥ was made at most tables and 4♠ is problematic. Teammates had done well by finding the trump lead against 5♥ for 11 IMPs in.

Majors shown and denied

In this board from a teams event we were able to jump straight to four of a major at both tables:

S/Both	♠ Q J 6 5	
	♥ J 2	
	♦ K 9 8 5 2	
	♣ A 4	
♠ K 8 2		♠ 10 3
♥ A 9 8 4		♥ K Q 7 6 5 3
♦ 7		♦ J 10 3
♣ K Q J 6 5		♣ 7 2
	♠ A 9 7 4	
	♥ 10	
	♦ A Q 6 4	
	♣ 10 9 8 3	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♣	4♠	End	1♦ spades

West didn't fancy double with a stiff diamond. North was ready for the overcall, knowing that the opponents had at least eight hearts.

Our East-West in the closed room were also playing Scamp:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	No	4♥	No
			End

North and South might have acted but both went quietly. Note that East will often have a stronger hand for a jump to game in a strong club system.

If East had settled for 3♥, South would have been back in. Again, East knew about their spade fit, hence the slight overbid.

The big gains for 4-card major systems occur when opener has a 4-carder and responder can deliver a quick 1-3 or 1-4.

15 IMPs to the team that nailed its major fits early. (East led the ♥K)

Missing your best fit

When you reach a 4-3 fit at the 2-level, the opponents sometimes compete when they should pass.

Other times, length in our suit keeps them quiet:

W/EW	♠ K 10 5 2	
	♥ Q 9 7 3	
	♦ K Q 9 4	
	♣ J	
♠ A Q 6 3		♠ J 8 7
♥ 10 4		♥ A 5 2
♦ J 7 6		♦ 10 2
♣ K Q 10 7		♣ A 9 6 5 2
	♠ 9 4	
	♥ K J 8 6	
	♦ A 8 5 3	
	♣ 8 4 3	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦ spades	No	2♠	End

East preferred the 3-card raise to 1NT, in view of pointy cards and the small doubleton diamond.

Against this, South led the ♣4. Declarer won dummy's ♣K to play a trump to the jack. A trump to the ace followed by the rest of the clubs brought +110, matching the boring pairs in 3♣.

South was emboldened at some tables:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Dbl	3♣	3♥
End			

Nice try by East but 3♥ always made 9 or 10 tricks so +110 in 2♠ was a good score.

These three openings cover the 70% of 11-15 point hands with a 4+ major. They form the core of the system. We start low, partly to leave room to unravel shape, also because there is less need to preempt with major length. Hands with no major require a different approach.

Chapter 5

Minors – leftovers

Scamp has four bids for the 30% of hands with no major. We start high with these as mild preempts. This cramps responder but the relay structure can cope with the smaller number of shapes.

Gains come when the opponents interfere. Since opener denies a major, responder has less need for a takeout double. We switch to penalty doubles after these openings – see *Chapter 10*.

Opening 1NT

This shows 12-15 balanced-ish, no four card major. We drop the 11-counts to retain a workable range.

We also open 1NT with 5+4 in the minors, sometimes with a stiff major honour. You can open two of a minor instead with some of these, a better choice when the long minor is decent.

1NT	2♣	<i>strong relay</i> , virtually game-forcing
	2♦/♥	transfers
	2♠	range probe
	2NT	minors
	3♣/♦	preemptive

Opener can super-accept on a 15-count with three trumps.

To transfer then bid a new suit is **invitational** only and guarantees a side singleton – otherwise 2NT.

♠ 9 7	♠ A J 8 5 3
♥ Q 10 3	♥ K 9 2
♦ K 9 6 5	♦ Q J 4 3
♣ A K 4 2	♣ 3

WEST	EAST
1NT	2♥
2♠	3♦
No	

Stopping on a dime like this is unusual. With 5-2-4-2, East would bid 2NT over 2♠ and play there.

Responder would relay with a game-forcing 2-suiter.

A typical range probe would be 10⁺-12⁻ balanced but it could be an invite based on a long minor. See *Chapter 13 – Bright Ideas*.

2NT is acceptable with 4-4 in the minors, since opener is known to have at least one 4-card minor. Bidding 2NT then three of a major shows a fragment.

Responder should be on the lookout for the chance to preempt their major fit:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1NT	?	♠ 6 5
		♥ 9 5 4 3
		♦ J 7
		♣ K Q 10 5 3

They have at least eight spades so there's a lot to be said for 3♣. Most of the time dummy will track with 3+ trumps.

This is the relay structure, repeated from Chapter 3:

	1NT		
2♣ ^R	2♦	5 diamonds	
	2♥	5 clubs	
	2♠	2-3-4-4	
	2NT	3-2-4-4	2-3-3-5
	3♣	3-3-4-3	3-2-3-5
	3♦	3-3-3-4	3-3-2-5
	3♥		2-2-4-5
	3♠		1-3-4-5
	3NT		3-1-4-5

Two of a minor

These bids are natural, 10 -14 pts, no major, not balanced – either a 6-card suit or 5-4 with four of the other minor. Two-thirds of the time the long suit will be a 6-carder.

We drop the range to factor in the long suit.

♠ A 10 5 ♥ 8 ♦ K Q 5 ♣ A Q 9 6 5 4

That's a 1♣ opening.

In response, the *step* relays. Others are not forcing:

2♣	2♦	<i>strong relay</i> , usually 13+
	2♥/♠/3♦	constructive, around 9-12 pts
	2NT	invitational, 11-13
	3♣	constructive raise, say 9-12 TP
	3♥/♠	as you wish; invitational for us
	4♣	mixed

There is less room to manoeuvre, so responses need to be kept up to strength. With a weakish hand it's usually better to reach for the green card:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
2♣	?	♠ 10 3 2
		♥ A Q 6 5 4
		♦ K 10 4
		♣ 3 2

It is prudent to pass. 2♥ suggests a better suit, usually six since opener denies four and will sometimes pass 2♥ with a stiff heart and a shabby club suit.

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
2♦	?	♠ K 10 6 5 3
		♥ A J 5
		♦ 7 6
		♣ A 4 3

To relay with 2♥ will usually see you in game, perhaps opposite a minimum. If you don't fancy that, 2NT is a better choice than 2♠. You might still reach 4♠ if partner can show a fragment on the way.

Over these 2-level responses opener's three of a minor is unbalanced, to play. Other rebids show good hands.

The denied major gives opener an extra option over a natural response. 2♣ : 2♥ : 2♠ is good but scrambling, say 3-1-4-5 or 3-1-3-6.

This is the relay structure:

2♦ ^R	2♣	5+ clubs, no major
	2♥	& diamonds
	2♠	1-suiter (6+) HS
	2NT	1-suiter MS
	etc	

The 2-suiters also comes out Square, because 5-5s open 2NT:

	2♣	5+ clubs
2♦ ^R	2♥	& 4 diamonds
2♠ ^R	2NT	HS
	3♣	2-2-4-5

2♥ relays over the 2♦ opening. This is a PAIN because responder has to go to the 3-level to show hearts.

This time the whole structure is One step Up:

	2♦	5+ diamonds
2♥ ^R	2♠	& four clubs
	2NT	1-suiter (6+) HS
	3♣	1-suiter MS

For 1-suited diamonds, concatenate the 7321s at 3♠.

Finding the stoppers

After a constructive raise, it's stoppers up the line, with subtle adjustments:

♠ K 6	♠ 7 3 2
♥ A 9 3	♥ K 6
♦ 9 3	♦ A 5 4 2
♣ AK 8 6 3 2	♣ QJ 7 4
WEST	EAST
2♣	3♣
3♥	3♠ !
3NT	

3♥ denies a diamond stopper. 3♠ shows a diamond card, no spade stopper. Does that not make sense?

Distortion

There is some flexibility with minors. Occasionally it's right to open 1NT with a stiff major honour:

♠ K	♥ A 5 4	♦ AK 6 4	♣ J 9 6 4 3
-----	---------	----------	-------------

2♣ looks wrong with all the strength outside the long suit. Prefer 1NT, risking the 5-1 spade fit if partner transfers.

Hands with a small singleton major are problematic:

♠ A Q 5 ♥ 7 ♦ A K 6 4 ♣ J 9 6 4 3

A 1♦ opening on this deserves to receive an embarrassing 3-card raise, so 1NT again. No issue with those who choose 2♣. Awkward hands like this are rare. Give us some credit for including one.

It's sometimes better to pass with a 5-4 10-count:

♠ 5 ♥ 10 7 3 ♦ K Q 8 5 4 ♣ A J 9 6

Two chunky suits but we might pass if vulnerable. Think Rule of 20. Remember that partner's relay is effectively a game-force.

2NT for minors

This is the usual shape – 5-5 minors, good suits – but 10-14 pts. With poor suits, distort and open 2♣ or 2♦ instead. There is no relay.

2NT	3♣/♦	to play
	3♥/♠	natural and forcing
	3NT	to play
	4♣/♦	invitational

We also use three of a major as a notrump probe, or as a crude attempt to locate opener's major shortage. You **could** play 3♥ as a shape relay. (3♠ = HS, etc) We don't.

Higher openings

We prefer simple weak twos in the majors. Good suits if vul, 5-9 pts. 5-carders possible not vul in 1st and 3rd seats. See *Chapter 13* for our responding structure.

Our three bids are natural, often 6-card suits if not vulnerable.

The 3NT opening is gambling: solid 7-card minor, no ace or king outside. Over this, 4♦ asks for a shortage.

Our higher suit openings are natural. We can do without *Namyats*. In fact, our natural 4♣ and 4♦ openings have proved consistent winners. Vulnerable, we'd have something like this:

♠ 6 ♥ 9 ♦ Q 6 5 4 ♣ K Q J 9 7 4 3

3♣ is too tame and 5♣ too rich. You sail past 3NT but then 5♣ will sometimes be as good or better.

Transfer, then invite

♠ K 6 5	♠ Q 10 7 3 2
♥ AK 7	♥ Q 6 3
♦ 9 5 3	♦ 8
♣ QJ 8 2	♣ AK 7 4
WEST	EAST
1NT	2♥
2♣	3♣
4♠ !?	

A magical hand. Game-going responding hands relay it out. Problem hands for responder are those with hopes of a suit game but no love for notrumps, like this one.

3♣ is **invitational**, nearly always a red singleton, else 2NT. West should have bid 3♥, since a heart singleton would be bad news.

Flat 15-count again

N/NS	♠ AK 5		
	♥ K Q		
	♦ Q 9 5 2		
	♣ J 9 8 2		
♠ 4 3		♠ Q J 7	
♥ 10 8 7		♥ J 9 5 2	
♦ K J 10 8 6 3		♦ A 7	
♣ 6 3		♣ K Q 10 5	
	♠ 10 9 8 6 2		
	♥ A 6 4 3		
	♦ 4		
	♣ A 7 4		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1NT	No	2♥
No	3♠ !?	No	4♠

Not wanting to lose a vulnerable game swing to the strong notrumper at the other table, North overbid with this flawed 15-count. No fancy options here; maybe 2NT would be a 4333.

4♠ is not great but at least we right-sided it on the ♣K lead, ducked. Despite four losers, this should make by eloping.

Win the heart switch, lead a diamond. North gets to ruff a heart low, while the South hand scores three ruffs, the last one *en passant*.

Chapter 6

The strong club

Our 1♣ shows 16+. Some strong clubbers have lowered the minimum to 15, allowing them to tap the rich lode of 10-point hands with their limit openings. This is appealing but we have no desire to open flat 10-counts and a 15+ club is a bit cumbersome. (a quarter of openings) It also creates minor complications with openings in 3rd & 4th seat.¹

In choosing the opening bid, we add a point for a good 5-card suit so some 15-counts qualify:

♠ KQ965 ♥ 43 ♦ KQ5 ♣ AJ5

No flaws and a *good*² suit make this a 1♣ opening. You might stretch it further with an exceptional 5-loser hand:

♠ AQJ43 ♥ AK1076 ♦ 75 ♣ 4

Too good to risk 1♠. Just give partner ♠KTxx and a doubleton heart.

A 14-count with a good 6-card major is not quite enough – those hands do better to open 1♦/♥, planning a jump rebid. It's desirable to have a clear, agreed approach on borderline hands, to avoid the ethical problems that flow from a slow 1♣ opening.

Responses

Shape-showing begins one step higher than the limited openings. To retain symmetry, we compact the structure by removing flat hands from the major responses. We treat 5332s with a major as 1-suiters and have two response for the flat hands.³

1 See *Chapter 8 - After partner passes*

2 How about this – a *good* suit is one that will sometimes produce five tricks opposite the right honour-third. So KJxxx or better.

3 This *Compressed* structure – where bids that show a major deny a flat hand – only applies when responding to 1♣.

This is the way we do it:⁴

1♣	1♦	0-7 pts (or a bad, flat 8-count)
	1♥	4+ spades, <u>not flat</u> , 8+ pts
	1♠	4+ hearts, not spades, not flat
	1NT	4+ diamonds, no major, not balanced
	2♣	<i>flat</i> with at least one major
	2♦	<i>balanced</i> with no major, <u>exclude</u> 2-2-5+4
	2♥	Roman, short in a major
	2♠+	club 1-suiter (6+)

A reminder that *flat* means 4432 or 4333.

You need to be awake – don't respond 1♥ or 1♠ with a flat hand, or a Roman hand with both minors.

This sleight of hand causes the unbalanced hands to fall into line. Some of the balanced and Roman hands are pushed up the line to make way for the major 2-suiters:

1♣	1♥	spades, not flat
1♠ ^R	1NT	& hearts (then 2♦ = Roman)
	2♣	& diamonds
	2♦	& clubs, with 5+♠s
	2♥	& clubs, canapé
	2♠+	1-suiter (<u>5+</u> spades)

With majors, the 1-suited structure is adjusted to accommodate the 5332s. Bid 3♦ with this shape, displacing the higher shapes while concatenating the 7321s. This is how:

1♣	1♠	hearts
1NT ^R	2NT	middle shortage
3♣ ^R	3♦	<u>3-5-2-3</u>
	3♥	3-6-1-3
	3♠	2-7-1-3 <u>or</u> 3-7-1-2 (don't resolve these)
	3NT	3-7-0-3

A 1NT response shows a diamond 1-suiter (6+), or both minors:

1♣	1NT	diamonds
2♣ ^R	2♦	& clubs, 5+♦s
	2♥	& clubs, canapé
	2♠+	1-suiter (6+♦s)

⁴ There are other structures on the market. See *Chapter 18 - Arithmetic*.

Some examples

♠ K 10 5 4 ♥ A Q 6 5 4 ♦ 4 3 ♣ J 6

1♣	1♥	spades, not flat
1♠ ^R	1NT	hearts
2♣ ^R	2♥	canapé
2♠ ^R	3♣	4-5-2-2

♠ 7 ♥ A 4 3 ♦ K Q 10 6 5 4 ♣ 7 6 5

1♣	1NT	diamonds
2♣ ^R	2♠	1-suiter, high shortage
2NT ^R	3♦	1-3-6-3

Flat hands

5332s with a major become 1-suiters over 1♣, which leaves us with the 4432s & 4333s. This is the structure:

1♣	2♣	flat with at least one major	
2♦ ^R	2♥	spades & a minor	
	2♠	hearts & a minor	
2NT	4-4-2-3		& diamonds
3♣	4-4-3-2	& diamonds	4-2-3-4
3♦	4-3-3-3	2-4-3-4	4-3-2-4
3♥	3-4-3-3	3-4-2-4	

**“Spades, hearts, both-high, both-low,
square spades, square hearts.”**

The response to show a balanced hand with no major is 2♦. This is like the 1NT opening, excluding the 5-4s. The relay structure is otherwise the same:

**“5♦s, 5♣, both high, both low,
square diamonds, square clubs”**

Examples

♠ K 10 4 3 ♥ A J 4 3 ♦ K 4 3 ♣ 4 3

1♣	2♣	flat with a major
2♦ ^R	3♣	4-4-3-2

♠ 4 3 2 ♥ K 10 4 3 ♦ Q 6 3 2 ♣ A 4

1♣	2♣	
2♦ ^R	2♠	hearts & a minor
2NT ^R	3♣	diamonds
3♦ ^R	3♠	3-4-4- <u>2</u>

♠ A 3 2 ♥ 7 6 ♦ Q 10 5 4 3 ♣ A J 6

1♣	2♦	balanced no major
2♥ ^R	2♠	5 diamonds
2NT ^R	3♦	3- <u>2</u> -5-3

Over the negative

Opener can relay with 1♥, nominally 19+. All other rebids are limited to around 16-18:

1♦ ⁰⁻⁷	1♣	
	1♥ ^R	19+ any
	1♠	natural (4+) 16-19 pts
	1NT	16-18 balanced-ish
	2♣/♦/♥	natural, ideally 6-card suits, 16-18 pts ⁵
	2♠+	as you wish ⁶

2♣ is Stayman over the 1NT rebid. Other responses are the same as our usual – major transfers, 2♠ range probe, 2NT minors (5+4).

Opener's 1♠ could be a flat minimum with a good suit. Stronger flat hands bid 1NT or 1♥. The old style was to rebid 1♠ with five and 1NT with four, but that is unduly restrictive:

♠ A Q 10 6 ♥ 7 5 ♦ K J 4 3 ♣ A Q 2

Slightly prefer 1♠ to 1NT with this suity minimum. Partner's next bid will likely end the auction. If you rebid 1NT instead, you might catch an unwelcome raise on a 7-count. Also, you can't play in two of partner's long minor.

However, if we change the ♥7 to the queen, 1NT is preferable since you welcome a raise and are keener to be declarer.

⁵ An idea is to play 2♣ as ASPRO – hearts & another. See *Chapter 13*.

⁶ See *Chapter 13 - Bright Ideas*.

Also rebid 1♠ on a 4-carder with a longer minor:

♠ K J 6 4 ♥ A K 4 ♦ K Q 10 7 4 ♣ J

1♠, then 2♦ over 1NT or 2♣. This is a hand from play. Partner raised your 1♠ to two. Now what? See the end of the chapter.

After opener's 1♠ rebid, responder can run to two of a long suit with a weak hand but 1NT shows values, say 5-7 pts. Jump shifts are invitational for us. A jump to 2NT is a raise.

It's often right to rebid 1NT with five hearts:

♠ K 4 ♥ A J 8 5 4 ♦ K 10 4 2 ♣ A Q

Here you feel the loss of a natural 1♥ rebid. The hearts are shabby and the short suits well held so prefer 1NT to 2♥, which strongly suggests six.

It's all natural after opener's 2-level rebid. Responder's new suit needs good texture.

Showing shape after the negative

Think of opener's 1♥ relay as "19+ balanced, or an Acol Two plus". Responder splits the range in two, showing shape in the usual way with a maximum:

1♣	1♦	
1♥ ^R	1♠	0-4(5) any – 2nd negative
	1NT	spades, not flat, 5-7 pts
	2♣	hearts

This Compressed structure is Up Two steps. Opener can relay as a game force or *break the chain*, which is "forcing to 2NT, preference or repeat". (See Chapter 12)

WEST'S HAND	WEST	EAST	
♠ A K J 6 3	1♣	1♦	
♥ 8	1♥	2♣	hearts, 5-7
♦ A K 9 2	?		
♣ A 3 2			

2♠ looks better than effectively forcing to game by continuing relay with 2♦. Partner might have ♥KQxxxx and out, in which case you can stop in 3♥.

Over the second negative, opener slots into an old Acol-style opening structure:

1♦	1♣	
	1♥ ^R	
1♠ ⁰⁻⁴	1NT	19-21, usual responses
	2♣	only force
	2♦/♥/♠	Acol twos, not forcing
	2NT	22-23

These are pleasant auctions, since we can stay low with a 21-count opposite a near Yarborough.

There is no third negative after opener's 2♣. Instead responder can bid 2♦ as a waiting bid or show a decent suit. (2♥/♠ would usually be five but could be canapé with a long minor)

Au naturel, escaping the 4-3 fit

W/NS		♠ K J 6 4	
		♥ A K 4	
		♦ K Q 10 7 4	
		♣ J	
♠ 8 5 3			♠ A 9 7
♥ J 9 6 5 3			♥ Q 10 7
♦ 3			♦ J 9 8
♣ Q 9 7 6			♣ A K 10 8
		♠ Q 10 2	
		♥ 8 2	
		♦ A 6 5 2	
		♣ 5 4 3 2	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
No	1♣	No	1♦
	1♠		2♠
	3♦ canapé		4♦
	5♦		

North is clearly worth a try.

3♦ shows four spades and longer diamonds. South could be forgiven for passing 3♦ but three key honours were worth a raise. 4♠ probably would have made but 5♦ is clearly better.

If we swap around North's long suits to 5-3-4-1, a different approach is required. For us, 2NT would be the start of a short suit trial. See *Chapter 11*.

Using the negative to advantage

♠ A Q	♠ K J 7 4
♥ J 6 5 3 2	♥ 9
♦ A K 9 3	♦ 7 6
♣ A 5	♣ J 9 7 6 4 3

WEST	EAST	
1♣	1♦	
1NT	2♣	Stayman
2♥	2♠	4-card suit + a long minor
2NT	3♣	
No		

East had visions of 4♠ but no liking for notrumps. 2♠ catered for opener having 4-4.

Many of the natural pairs failed in some number of notrumps. West's jump to 2NT gave East no way out.

Extracting support

♠ A J 7 5 3	♠ K 8 2
♥ K 10 4	♥ A J 6 2
♦ K Q 7	♦ J 9 4 3
♣ A 8	♣ 9 7

WEST	EAST	
1♣	2♣	8+ balanced with a major
2♦	2♠	hearts
2NT	3♣	& diamonds
3♦	3♠	3-4-4-2
4♠	No	

It took a while for West to uncover the spade fit.

In truth, this is not a great auction because the weaker, known hand ended up as declarer. Didn't matter this time.

West might have foreseen this and switched to natural, bidding 2♠ over 2♣.

Bigger and smaller

N/Both		♠ 9 8 3 2 ♥ Q 10 9 4 ♦ 4 2 ♣ 9 5 4	
♠ K ♥ 7 6 5 3 ♦ K J 8 7 ♣ 10 7 6 3		♠ A Q J 4 ♥ A K 8 ♦ A Q 10 9 ♣ K J	♠ 10 7 6 5 ♥ J 2 ♦ 6 5 3 ♣ A Q 8 2
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	No	No	1♣
	1♦		1♥ ¹⁹⁺
	1♠ ⁰⁻⁴		2♣ ^{strong}
	2♦		2NT ^{forcing}
	3♣ ^{Puppet Stayman}		3♦
	3♠ ^{hearts}		3NT
	No ?!		

2NT over 1♠ would be 22-23, which allows the delayed 2NT to be forcing. Useful if South has an even bigger hand. North applied Puppet then gave up, not wishing to be declarer in 4♠.

On a club lead and continuation, 3NT should make if you can trust their carding in clubs. Win and cash the top hearts. Good news there means you can afford the safety play in spades of cashing the ♠A at trick five. *Virtue Rewarded.*⁷

Looks like East should consider switching to the ♦6 at trick two.

⁷ Or *Pamela*. Why did they make us read that?

Chapter 7

Relaying to slam

Relay systems are seen at their best in slam bidding. This is no surprise – each relay response adds a piece to the jigsaw of describer's hand. As slam approaches, the asker can sometimes name every high honour in partner's hand. This makes decisions easy, impresses any kibitzers and irritates the opponents.

While learning relay, you might prefer to stick with your usual slam machinery – RKC Blackwood and cue bids – but these do not mesh well with relay.

Because positive responses to 1♣ are unlimited, opener would like to find out more about strength before pressing the Blackwood button. Sometimes this is not possible:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	EAST	
♠ A 5	1♣	1♠	hearts, 8+ pts
♥ K Q 7	1NT ^R	3♥	3-6-3-1
♦ Q 7 6	?		
♣ A K 10 6 5			

What now? Remember that responder does not know that hearts will be trumps. Slam is easy opposite an ace and two kings but the 5-level may be too high opposite the wrong minimum:

♠ K J 7 ♥ A J 8 6 4 2 ♦ 10 5 4 ♣ 8

so opener might simply raise to 4♥ and hope partner can kick with the right hand. It would be nice to set trumps below game or find out about strength.

Points for slam

High card points are fine for bidding game but have limitations for slams. In slams, aces and kings carry more weight than their point count. Players supplement the 4-3-2-1 count with their favourite form of Blackwood, ignoring the fertile middle ground.

Some systems – notably Blue Club – count *Kontrols* (A = 2, K = 1) a good yardstick of slam potential. We have that option (see *Chapter 14*) but we usually prefer another measure – *Slam Points*.¹ (A = 3, K = 2, Q = 1) The 3-2-1 scale better reflects the relative slam values of the honours and helps the asker to identify specific picture cards. The Slam Point count also limits describer's hand.

Asking for strength

After the shape is out, asker bids the step to ask for Slam Points. However a bid of 3NT – or a slam bid – is always a sign-off. (That is, if the describer showed the full shape with 3♠, then 4♣ would ask for SPs) Responses depend on the high card strength previously shown:

HCP	Slam Points
10 - 15	6 - 9 (10)
12 - 15 (1NT)	7 - 10
8+	5+
5-7	3 - 5

Occasionally, describer might have one fewer than the advertised minimum – giving a positive to 1♣ with 4 SPs – something the asker needs to bear in mind. A limited opening won't have 11 SPs because A-A-A-K is enough to open 1♣.

Here's an example on showing SPs. East holds this 1♥ opening:

♠ A Q 4 ♥ K 7 6 5 ♦ 3 ♣ A 10 6 5 4

WEST EAST

	1♥	
1♠ ^R	2♥	& clubs, canapé
2♠ ^R	3♦	3-4-1-5
3♥ ^{SPs}	4♦	9 SPs

With shape revealed by 3♦, relayer bids the step to ask for Slam Points. East counts fingers "6-7-8-9, ♠-NT-♣-♦" and waits. West might bid the step (4♥) to continue relay. Any other minimum bid by relayer – even 4NT – would be a sign-off.

¹ Also known as QPs (Queen points)

Slam Points give an accurate guide to slam potential. The relayer should think of slam if the total of Slam Points and useful 3-2-1 distribution points is 21+, a sort of key number.

Resurrection

If the 1♣ opener finds shape then signs off without asking for Slam Points, responder is expected to *resurrect* with Base+4 = 9 SPs.

Bidding the first step over the sign off shows 9 SPs; could be 8 SPs and a chunky, shapely hand. The 2nd step shows 10 SPs, etc. (Resurrection with 9 SPs is optional – a square 12-count with three empty aces will pass)

A limited hand cannot resurrect. All bids by a limited hand over the relayer's sign-off are natural, self-supporting suits. Likewise, an unlimited hand can retreat to game in known long suit (6+ major or 7+ minor) so resurrection ignores those steps.

Ask or not?

The rough guide is that key number 21. That will do in the early days, or if time is short. Better is to construct a typical hand **one short of resurrection** and see whether it makes slam a good bet. Also ask "Would any relay response take us too high?"

WEST'S HAND	WEST	EAST	
♠ A Q 4	1♣	2♣	8+ bal with a major
♥ K Q 9 5	2♦	2♠	hearts
♦ A K J 2	2NT	3♦	2-4-3-4
♣ 9 5	?		

Let's give partner a useful 8 SP hand (one short of resurrection):

♠ K x ♥ A J x x ♦ x x x ♣ A x x x

Slam is okay opposite this and space is not a problem, so check for strength then press the following button if partner shows enough.

Denial cue bidding (DCB)

Most symmetric systems use a special version of cue bidding, called denial cue bidding. With Slam Points known, the relayer makes the cheapest bid (other than 3NT) to ask, "Do you have a top honour (AKQ) in your longest suit?"

Describer then bids the next step to **deny** an honour in the longest suit, or the **higher-ranking** of equal suits. If describer skips the step, it **shows** an honour in that target suit. Then describer looks at the second suit, continuing to skip steps until a suit with no honour is reached.

This is East's hand:

♠ J 6 ♥ K 8 7 ♦ 7 ♣ A 9 8 6 5 4 3

WEST	EAST	
1♣	3♥	2-3-1-7
3♣ ^{SPs}	3NT	5 SPs (rarely 4)
4♣ ^{DCB}	?	

East now bids 4♣, which shows a top honour in clubs (by skipping 4♦) an honour in hearts (by skipping 4♥) but no spade honour.

There are two adjustments. We also stop with A-K or A-Q in a suit, so stopping shows **no honour, or two including the ace**. (That is, 0 or 4+ SPs)

With singletons we switch to positive cueing. Bidding the step shows a stiff ace or king. (We ignore stiff queens, both in counting SPs and DCB)

Another example. This is East's hand, a 1♦ opening:

♠ A 9 8 3 2 ♥ 6 5 ♦ A Q 8 7 ♣ K 9

WEST	EAST	
	1♦	spades
1♠ ^R	1NT	& diamonds
2♣ ^R	3♣	5-2-4-2
3♦ ^{SPs}		

After opener's complete shape is revealed, West asks for Slam Points with 3♦. The base for the 1♦ opening is 6 SPs, so East counts "6-7-8-9, ♥-♠-NT-♣":

....	4♣	9 Slam Points
4♦	^{DCB}	

West triggers denial cue-bidding with 4♦. East looks first at spades, the longest suit. Bidding the step (4♥) would deny a spade honour or show two with the ace. East has a spade honour, so doesn't bid

4♥. Instead he looks at the next longest suit, diamonds, this time bidding the next step (4♠) to show 0 or 2:

.... 4♠ ♠ - yes, ♦ - 0, or 2 with the ace
4NT DCB

West isn't through and bids the step to continue DCB. In response, East bids the step (5♣) to deny an honour in the next suit – hearts – the higher-ranking doubleton:

..... 5♣ ♥ - 0 or 2
5♦ DCB

West steams ahead. East has a club honour and says so by skipping 5♥. This completes the first pass through the suits and takes us back to spades. East takes a second look at each suit and bids 5♠ to deny a second spade honour

.... 5♠ ♣ - yes, ♠ - no 2nd
6♣ No

West places the contract, revealing the trump suit for the first time. West's hand:

♠ Q6 ♥ A10 4 ♦ K3 ♣ A Q J 10 3 2

Quickly now, play it on a trump lead!

Rules for Slam Points

- Relayer cannot ask for strength until describer's shape is completely revealed.
- 3NT is to play, as are all slam bids.
- If the 1♣ opener signs off after finding shape, describer is expected to resurrect with Base +4 = 9 SPs.
A limited hand cannot resurrect.
- Stiff kings (kingletons) count as 1 SP and are included in DCB.
- Stiff queens are ignored, both in counting SPs and showing honours.

DCB - First Scan

- Descriptor looks at suits in order of length. With suits of equal length, look at the higher-ranking suit first.
- Bidding the step shows no A, K or Q in the corresponding suit, or two honours including the ace (A-K, A-Q or A-K-Q). That is, 0 or 4+ SPs².
- With an honour in the suit in question, describer skips the step and looks at the next suit, continuing to skip until a suit with 0 or 4+ SPs is reached.
- When looking at a singleton, describer switches to positive cueing – bidding the corresponding step shows the stiff ace or king, skipping over denies either.
- Nominally, the furthest you can go is a raise of the DCB ask. For instance, if partner asks with 4♣, don't go past 5♣ without a good reason. (Substantial unrevealed extras)

DCB - Second Scan (rarely used)

- If describer has shown an honour, skipping again shows a second honour. (KQ, KJ or QJ, but not AJ³) Stopping denies a second honour, unless AJ.
- If describer has shown 0 or 2 honours in a suit, a stop second time round confirms no honour; a skip shows two honours only; skipping two steps to show three honours. (AKQ, AKJ or AQJ)
Often, describer can tell that relayer knows whether it's 0 or 2. If it's zero, the suit drops out. If it's 2+, use the scheme above.

Do you or don't you?

With DCB, the relayer keeps pressing the button until he knows enough to place the contract. The method is sound but there is room for vision. The relayer must assess how likely it is that partner has the right cards and whether a DCB response might prove embarrassing.

2 Some pairs only stop with 0 or 6 SPs (so AKQ). Not convinced.

3 Because the relayer might not be able to distinguish KQxx from AJxx (both 3 SPs)

Here's a complex one through the eyes of the relayer:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	EAST	
♠ A Q 7	1♣	1♠	4+ hearts, 8+ pts
♥ A Q 10	1NT ^R	3♣	6♥s, semi-balanced
♦ A Q J 7	3♦ ^R	3♥	3-6-2-2
♣ Q 10 3	?		

A positive opposite a 21-count makes slam likely. West grinds out shape, then stops to decide whether it's safe to continue.

If we ask for strength and East bids 4♦, we can't stop in 4♥⁴. That's okay since 4♦ over 3♠ would show 7 SPs, when slam is good. So

3♠^{SPs} 4♣ 6 SPs

Is that enough? Let's construct some typical hands. We can tell from our hand that partner has three kings, so start by assuming one is the likely ♥K.

♠K & ♦K would see us in 5♥, which would be **very** unlucky to fail.

♣K & ♦K means slam is virtually cold.

♠K & ♣K makes 6♥/E 50% on a diamond lead, a bit better if South leads something else. (A pity that partner bid hearts first) How's 6NT? Well, we might get a club lead, or partner might have the ♠J, or we might guess well. In any case, 5NT would be safe opposite the black kings if we decide to chicken out. So we press on:

4♦^{DCB} 4♠ ♥ - yes, ♠ - no

So the minor kings, therefore 6NT.

Partner would bid 4♥ without the ♥K. (We could sit that or even sign off in 4NT) East's hand:

♠ 8 6 2 ♥ K 9 8 5 3 2 ♦ K 8 ♣ K 6

What happened to the Standard pair at the other table? After West opened 2NT, East's 9-count had to make the running. After Texas and some cueing, she bailed in 5♥, concerned about trump losers.

"Ask for SPs if you can construct a typical non-resurrecting maximum where slam is good, and you won't get too high otherwise."

4 Some pairs use a game bid in describer's known **6-card suit** as a sign-off, even if it's the step. (For them, 4♥ over this 4♦ would be to play. 4♠ would be DCB)

The following hands are taken (undoctored!) from recent events.

♠ A 10 6 4 3	♠ 9
♥ A J 10 8	♥ 4 3
♦ K	♦ A 8 5 4
♣ A Q 3	♣ K J 10 8 6 2

1♣	1NT	diamonds, 8+ pts
2♣ ^R	2♥	& clubs, canapé
2♠ ^R	2NT	spade shortage
3♣ ^R	3♥	1-2-4-6
3♠ ^{SPs}	3NT	4-5 SPs
4♣ ^{DCB}	4♠	♣, ♦ - yes, ♥ - no
6♣	No	

It's just possible that East had the ♠K and ♦Q instead of the ♦A but that would also be okay.

Incidentally, East knows that partner is aware that he has no heart honour, not two. (Having shown an honour in each minor, there's no room for 4+ SPs in hearts)

Slam sum: 11+5 SPs + 5 DP (on 3-2-1 scale) = 21. This is counting the stiff ♦K as 1 SP.

♠ K 7	♠ A 10 8
♥ A K 7 2	♥ J 8 5 3
♦ K Q 9 5 4	♦ 5
♣ K 7	♣ A Q 4 3 2

1♠ ^R	1♥	
2♠ ^R	2♥	& clubs, canapé
3♥ ^{SPs}	3♦	3-4-1-5
4♥	3NT	7 SPs
	No	

Easy stop, since the equally likely ♠A, ♣A and ♥Q is not quite enough. 4♣ over 3NT would drop us at the 5-level for no good reason. You kind of hope that South had ♥QT96.

♠ K 10 8 7	♠ A 6 3 2
♥ 3	♥ Q 8 6 5
♦ K 10 9 6 4	♦ A Q J 3
♣ A K Q	♣ 4

1♣	1♥	spades
1♠ ^R	1NT	& hearts
2♣ ^R	2♦	3-suited
2♥ ^R	2♠	& diamonds
2NT ^R	3♣	4-4-4-1
3♦ ^{SPs}	4♣	8 SPs
4♦ ^{DCB}	4NT	♠, ♥ - yes, ♦ - 0 or 2
6♦	No	

That 1♣ opening was a mild overbid; we would certainly open 1♥ if the majors were swapped.

West can work out that partner has ♦A-Q to make up the total. Again, East might have the ♠Q and ♥A – it doesn't matter. Either way, there's just one major loser. Good to avoid 6♠.

.

♠ A K Q	♠ J 7 5 4 3
♥ A Q 4 3	♥ K J 8 6 5
♦ A 7 3	♦ 8
♣ K 7 4	♣ 10 8

1♣	1♦	0-7 pts
1♥ ¹⁹⁺	1NT	spades, 5-7 pts (Up 2)
2♣ ^R	2♦	& hearts
2♥ ^R	3♣	5-5 or better
3♦ ^R	3♥	high shortage
3♠ ^R	3NT	5-5-1-2
4♣ ^{SPs}	4♦	2 or 3 SPs
4♥ ^{DCB}	4♠	♠ - no
4NT ^{DCB}	5♦	♥ - yes, ♣ - no
6♥	No	

West keeps grinding away, knowing the ♣K will be protected in a heart contract. It took a while to nail the ♥K.

Slam sum: 15+2 SPs + 3 DPs = 20. The double fit swings it.

♠ A J 9 5
 ♥ Q 8 3
 ♦ A K 7 6 3
 ♣ Q

♠ 7 6 4 2
 ♥ A K 10 9 4
 ♦ —
 ♣ A K 10 3

2♣ ^R	1♠	majors
2♥ ^R	2♦	flat or Roman
3♠ ^{SPs}	3♥	4-5-0-4 ⁵
4NT ^{DCB}	4♠	10 SPs "base +4 is a raise"
5♦ ^{DCB}	5♣	♥ - 0 or 2
6♥	5♥	♠ - 0 or 2
	No	

West can place partner with the two ace-kings.
The only challenge is to avoid 6♠.

♠ A 9 8
 ♥ 2
 ♦ A K Q 6 4 3
 ♣ A 6 2

♠ Q 7 3 2
 ♥ A K J 9 7
 ♦ J 9 5
 ♣ 9

1♣	1♥	spades, 8+
1♠ ^R	1NT	& hearts
2♣ ^R	2♥	canapé
2♠ ^R	3♦	4-5-3-1
3♥ ^{SPs}	3NT	6 SPs
4♣ ^{DCB}	4♦	♥ - 0 or 2
4♥ ^{DCB}	4NT	♠ - yes, ♦ - no
6♦	No	

Grand slam needs ♥AKQ, so West checks for this then settles for six when the presence of a spade honour precludes it. East could also have ♥AQ and ♠K.

5 2♠ = balanced, 2NT = ♦s, 3♠ = 4-4-1-4, 3♦ = 4-4-0-5.

♠ 10 5	♠ AK 8 7 6 3
♥ A 8 5	♥ K J 10
♦ AK J 9 2	♦ Q 8 5
♣ Q 9 3	♣ 10

1♠ ^R	1♦	spades
3♥ ^{SPs}	3♦	6-3-3-1
4♦ ^{DCB}	4♣	8 SPs
4♠ ^{DCB}	4♥	♠ - 0 or 2
6♦	5♥	♥, ♦ - yes, ♣ - no, ♠ - no 3rd
	No	

Note that East did not need to confirm two spade honours, thus 5♥ denied a third. On a bad day, East will have

♠ AQ 8 7 6 3 ♥ K Q 10 ♦ Q 8 5 ♣ 10

when slam is a bit below 50% but the actual hand is three times as likely. See *Chapter 18* for the mathematics.

Slam sum: 9+8 SPs + 3 DP = 20. East has perfect cards.

♠ Q 10 7 5 4 2	♠ AK 9 8 6 3
♥ AK	♥ —
♦ Q	♦ K J 6
♣ A 9 8 3	♣ 6 5 4 2

1♠ ^R	1♦	spades
2♥ ^R	2♦	& clubs, 5+♠s
3♣ ^R	2NT	high shortage
4♣ ^{SPs}	3♠	6-0-3-4
4♠ ^{DCB}	4♥	7 SPs
5♣ ^{DCB}	4NT	♠ - 0 or 2
5♠	5♦	♣ - no
	No	

This is an easy stop since West knows the ♦A is missing (A-K + A = 8 SPs) and partner showed the wrong minor king.

West would have done better to make a splinter raise – *Chapter 11*.

♠ A 6 2
 ♥ K 5 3
 ♦ K J 6 5
 ♣ A K 10

♠ 9
 ♥ A J 10
 ♦ A Q 3
 ♣ Q 9 8 7 5 2

2♦^R

2NT^R

3♥^{SPs}

4♦^{DCB}

7NT

2♣ clubs, 10-14

2♠ 6+♠s, HS

3♦ 1-3-3-6

4♣ 8 SPs

4NT ♣, ♥ - yes, ♦ - 0 or 2

Very easy for us, thanks to strangely silent opponents. Natural bidders would have to work hard to locate the ♦Q.

♠ A 7 4
 ♥ A 8 6
 ♦ A 7 2
 ♣ A K 4 3

♠ K Q J 5
 ♥ K 7
 ♦ K 10 4
 ♣ Q J 10 5

1♠^R

2♦^R

3♣^{SPs}

4♣^{DCB}

5♦^{DCB}

6♣ or 7♣

1♦ spades, 10-15

2♣ balanced

2NT 4-2-3-4

3♠ 8 SPs

5♣ ♠, ♣, ♦, ♥ - yes, no further info

5NT ♠, ♣ - 2nd, ♦ - no 2nd

Probably just six, even though East got to show the ♣J. 7♣ needs four spade tricks, so ♠J; or ♠10 and luck or a 3-3 break. Plus extra chances like the ♥J and various squeezes.

Maybe it was worth a shot.

Naturally, the Butler field bid 1NT : 2♣ : 2♦ : 6NT, so relaying to the "correct" 6♣ cost us 2 IMPs. Sigh.

♠ K J	♠ A Q 6 3
♥ A K Q 9 8 6	♥ J 7 4
♦ A 9 6 5	♦ 4
♣ 10	♣ A 7 6 5 2

1♣	1♥	spades, 8+
1♠ ^R	2♥	longer clubs
2♠ ^R	3♦	4-3-1-5
3♥ ^{SPs}	4♣	7 SPs
4♦ ^{DCB}	4♠	♣ - yes, ♠ - 0 or 2
4NT ^{DCB}	5♣	♥ - no
5♦ ^{DCB}	5♠	♦ - no, ♣ - no 2nd
7♥		

3♦ came as a pleasant surprise. 5♦ was needed to check that partner did not have ♣KQxxx. (Would have skipped 5♠ with that)

♠ A K 9 3	♠ Q 10 8 4 2
♥ A Q 4	♥ 5 3
♦ J 8	♦ A K 9
♣ A J 10 3	♣ 7 4 2

1♣	1♥	spades, 8+ pts
1♠ ^R	2♠	HS
2NT ^R	3♦	5-2-3-3
3♥ ^{SPs}	3NT	6 SPs
4♣ ^{DCB}	4♥	♠ - yes, ♦ - 0 or 2
4♠ ^{DCB}	4NT	♣ - no
6♠		

West pushed the boat out a bit. Just five of 70 pairs bid this one. Slam by West is about 60% so no complaints.

4NT revealed the ♦AK. You work it out!

♠ 5	♠ A J 10 8 4
♥ A Q 4 3	♥ K 10
♦ A K Q 9 8 6	♦ 10 7 4
♣ K 4	♣ A 7 3
1♣	1♥ spades, 8+ pts
1♠ ^R	2♠ HS
2NT ^R	3♦ 5-2-3-3
3♥ ^{SPs}	4♦ 8 SPs
4♥ ^{DCB}	4NT ♠ - yes, ♦ - no
5♣ ^{DCB}	5♠ ♣, ♥ - yes, no 2nd ♠
7♦	

Again, West had to go round the block to check that East did not have ♠KQ. That hand would bid 5NT to show a second spade honour.

Asking for *Kontrols* (A=2, K=1) would have been quicker.

Some pairs don't use Slam Points at all, using the step to ask instead for *Kontrols*, on the way to DCB.

Others don't even use DCB. After shape is out, they might use the step as a *puppet*, a prelude to suit-setting and RKCB. There is also the well-known 4♦ *End Signal*. Some of these options are covered in *Chapter 14 – More Slams*.⁶

Yes, but is there time to play it?

Those examples are neat but unlikely to sway many. "How common are slams anyway? What happens when they overcall, which will often happen?"

Fair enough. Full relay auctions are rare – we average three or four a session, maybe one of which is a slam hand. We've included a lot to show the full system in action. Opportunities may be rare but you have to be ready.

6 Not all. There are heaps of methods. Go google, starting with Mulberry.

Chapter 8

After partner passes

60 years ago, Al Roth and his mates extolled the virtues of sound opening bids. Here is pass by the dealer from Sheinwold's *Five Weeks to Winning Bridge*:

♠ K Q 10 8 ♥ K Q 2 ♦ K 7 6 5 ♣ 4 3

For Fred, 12-13 point hands needed two quick tricks and a comfortable rebid. As a consequence, we were expected to open light in third seat to cater for a heavy initial pass by partner. Scamp opens most 11-counts and a lot of 10-counts in first seat, reducing the need for third hand to protect.

However, it's still attractive to open light in third seat, to direct the lead or preempt when our side is outgunned.

Third seat changes

Apart from 1♣, third seat openings are **natural**, including 1♦.

We like majors to show a suit worth bidding – five cards or a chunky 4-carder.

Avoid opening a major with a bad 4-card suit:

♠ 9 8 4 ♥ Q 8 6 3 ♦ A K 3 ♣ K 4 2

Simple hands like this are awkward. Your side will be outgunned half the time and it's better to defend on most of the others. We might pass vulnerable, 1♦ if not.

♠ K J 8 6 5 ♥ 6 3 ♦ A 10 3 2 ♣ J 4

Pass if vulnerable. Not vul, the choice between 1♠ and 2♠ is a personality test.

The style involves farming out some of the Scamp major hands to other calls. We end up with a form of Precision:

	<i>Pass</i>
1♣	16+ but balanced 16-counts open 1NT
1♦	3+♦s; 11-13 balanced or 4+♦s unbalanced
1♥/♠	usually 5+, or a chunky 4-carder could be a club canapé
1NT	14-16 balanced, could have a 5-card major
2♣	6+♣s, rarely 5-4 with a major
2♦+	1-suiters, wide-range weak twos

Be keen to preempt with a long minor, prepared to bury a major:

♠ 6 ♥ K1065 ♦ 87 ♣ AQ10653

We like 2♣ in third seat, despite the decent hearts. Partner can always bid 2♦ to ask for a major, or double for takeout. (After a 2♣ opening in 1st or 2nd seat, double would be penalty)

♠ J1087 ♥ K ♦ A43 ♣ AK986

What's it to be? Don't like 2♣; or 1♠ with one of 15 points there.

1♦ is okay but a 1NT rebid is 11-13.

1♦ : 1♥ : 1♠ is acceptable, though it suggests more diamonds. At the table, 1NT was chosen. It worked well, when partner turned up with a 4-5-2-2 10-count.

With 11-13 flat, open 1♦ much of the time, sometimes a chunky 4-card major, otherwise pass:

♠ A87 ♥ K76 ♦ J3 ♣ KJ873

You might try 2♣ but we would pass, not 1♦. We like partner to be able to raise diamonds. There is another obscure reason for avoiding 1♦ on a doubleton – that would be **alertable**.

We want to avoid the scenario where an opponent sees or hears the alert of 1♦ and thinks "Aha! Spades."

There is an overlap between 1♦ and 2♦, which we can live with. Think of the 2♦ opening as a goodish weak two.¹

¹ An alternative would be to use 2♦ in third seat as old-style Precision: 4-4-1-4 / 4-4-0-5, include 4+3-1-5. Then a major opening would nearly always be five.

Passed hand responses

Virtually everything is descriptive, not forcing; no relays. A problem hand is dealer's flat 11-count, too rare to set aside 2NT, which should show fit. Better to SNAP² with 1NT.

Pass

1♥	1♠	natural, 4+
	1NT	SNAP, good 8-11
	2♣/♦	as before – unbalanced, usually six
	2♥	a bit beefier, say 8-11 TP
	2♠	maybe 5-3 majors
	2NT+	4-card limit (see <i>Chapter 11</i>)
	3♣/♦	fit-showing

SNAP avoids playing those 25-26 counts in 1NT:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ K 8 5	No	No	1♥	No
♥ 10 7	?			
♦ K J 9 4				
♣ A 7 3 2				

1NT has to cater for this. 2NT would be a raise.

Jumps shifts are fit-showing – three card support:

♠ 8 6 5	♠ 10 9
♥ K 3 2	♥ A Q J 6
♦ 10 8	♦ A 5 3
♣ A K 8 7 6	♣ Q 5 4 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
No		1♥	1♠
3♣		4♥	

East could open 1♦ but ♥AQJ6 is like a 5-card suit, happy to be raised on three. West is too strong for a simple raise, which could be shaded after the overcall.

3♣ shows 5-3 shape and about a 10-count, giving East an easy decision. Declarer will pitch on the third spade lead.

Over the 1NT opening, 2♣ is simple Stayman. The rest as per usual, except that responder's double changes from penalty to takeout.

A major raise shows a good hand, around 8-11 TP, so we don't need or use Drury. A recent example:

♠ A 8 3	♠ K Q 7 6 5
♥ K 10 7 2	♥ A J 3
♦ J 9 7 3	♦ 6
♣ Q 3	♣ A 7 5 4

WEST	EAST	
Pass	1♠	
2♠	2NT	<i>Chapter 11 again</i>
3♣?	3♦	
4♠	No	

West would pass 1♠ without the ♥K. For us, opener's 2NT was the start of a short suit trial, 3♣ asked where.

Playing Standard, the dealer has to raise on a 6-count, lest opener has 19. Hence their need for Drury.

Those who play 10-14 openings and a 15+ 1♣, boost it to 17+ opposite a passed hand. Responder gives a positive with 7-9 points. This is a meaningful range, though you need to learn a new set of numbers. The limit openings become a workable 12-16. They can pass their 12-counts if they wish, opposite dealer's known 0-9.

Three-level and higher

We won't patronise. Not vulnerable, a three opening is sometimes a 6-carder for us – in first or third. Prefer seven cards if vulnerable in third seat, since the 2-level is available with six.

A gambling 3NT opposite a passed hand will always have a stopper outside. The gamble is for partner to guess which.

Chapter 9

Interference

We like to continue relay when the opponents interfere, as they are prone to do. For them to sit back and watch a relay auction to game or slam is losing bridge – and boring.

When they overcall, we lose some steps but it's not one-way traffic. An overcall gives back two steps – pass & double – to replace the ones they stole.

If they take too many steps we revert to natural, rather than have the structure forced up too far.

The Rule of Three

Relay officially begins when the asker makes a **shape-asking** bid.

Once relay has begun, we use the *Rule of Three* to decide whether the chain is still intact. If the interference comes within three bids (inclusive) our last call, relay can continue. If they bid higher or both opponents bid, it's all off:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	No	1♠ ^R	2♦
?			

We can cope with this, since 2♦ is within three bids. South has robbed West of three bids (1NT, 2♣ & 2♦) but we get pass and double to compensate. This is a net loss of one step, so the structure is moved Up One. West continues:

Pass	& diamonds
DbI	balanced
2♥	& clubs, with 5+♥s
2♠	& clubs, canapé

If West passes to show diamonds, East can use the next step – double – to continue relay (aware that opener might pass):

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	No	1♠ ^R	2♦
No ⁴⁺ ♦	No	DbI ^R	No
2♥ ^{Roman}			

2♦ is the usual bid for Roman. We are Up One, so 2♥.

For those who like tables:

<i>If they:</i>	<i>the structure is shifted:</i>
double	down two
bid 1 step	down one
bid 2 steps	square
bid 3 steps	up one
bid 4 steps+	no more relays

We are prepared for them to push the shapes up by one, but no further. One up means that common shapes like 5431 “come out” at 3♥, leaving room for a cheap strength ask. To stretch the chain further is playable, but probably unwise.

	♠ K J 9 2		♠ A 10	
	♥ A 7 4		♥ 9 2	
	♦ Q 2		♦ K J 10 9 3	
	♣ A K J 8		♣ Q 6 3 2	
SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST	
	1♣	No	1NT	diamonds, 8+
2♥	No ^R	No	Dbl	& clubs, 5+♦s
No	2♠ ^R	No	3♦	2-2-5-4

2♥ is within three steps so West can **pass to relay**. In response, double is the first step, clubs. The 2♥ overcall has sent the structure Up One, which is where we finished.

When pass is a relay, double is **penalty**. If South had overcalled 2♣, West could double for penalty, since we would still be in relay.

If South had bid 2♠ or higher, the chain would be broken. Double would be takeout. Pass would of course be forcing.

If their side bids twice after a shape-ask, there are no more relays:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	No	1♠ ^R	2♣
Dbl ^{bal}	2♥	?	

North's 2♥ stops relay. However, if North had redoubled, East could continue relay by passing. Legally speaking, (re)double is a *call*, not a *bid*.

Doubles & the Rule of 3

Any double by them takes us down two, ahead of the game. We adjust by continuing relay over higher bids by the next player:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	No	1♠ ^R	Dbl
RDbl ^{bal}	2♠	?	

2♠ is beyond three steps but relay is still intact. Effectively, 2♠ has come over 2♣ by opener, so within three steps.

They bid over our 1♣

The modern style against a strong club is to overcall on quite bad hands, to deprive us of a free relay run to game or slam.

Some methods feature unanchored 2-suiters (“blacks or reds” for instance) starting a guessing game and depriving us of cuebids.

Our methods for dealing with artificial intervention are in later chapters.

Splitting the negative

If the intervention comes before relay has started, we mostly switch to natural. See later in the chapter.

If the overcall is low – double or 1♦¹ – we retain shape-showing for game force hands:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	
1♣	1♦	No	0-4, no relays
		Dbl	5-8 any, no relays
		1♥	spades, 8+ pts
		1♠	hearts, not spades, etc

Here the overcall gives us a step, which we return via the split negative, leaving us Square. The 5-8 double suggests a couple of useful cards.

♠ K 8 7 6 ♥ 7 6 ♦ 10 8 7 ♣ Q 10 8 2

Enough to double a 1♦ overcall, whatever the meaning. Those court cards figure to be useful.

1 Some pairs continue relay after a 1♥ overcall:
Pass = 0-4, Dbl = 5-8, 1♠ = One Step Up.

Interference after the negative

If fourth hand overcalls the 1♦ negative, it's all natural. (If 4th hand doubles 1♦, opener's redouble is relay, the only exception)

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ K J 5 4	1♣	No	1♦	1♥
♥ 8 6	Dbl			
♦ A Q J 4				
♣ A K 4				

This is normal takeout. Other bids are as if South had opened 1♥ – jumps in a suit are natural and forcing, 2♥ is Michaels, 2NT would be minors. If South overcalls 1♠, West would bid 1NT with these cards, showing a little extra, say 17-20.

After limited openings

Mostly we drop relay whenever opener's limited opening gets overcalled. We retain relay in one instance only, when the next hand doubles 1♦:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	
1♦	Dbl	RDbI	range probe, not weak ²
		1♥	strong relay, 13+
		1♠	weakish 3-card raise
		1NT+	as before

Shape-showing over responder's 1♥ relay is Down One.

If North bids 1♥ or higher, it's all off. Double is normal takeout.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♥	1♠	?	♠ 10 7 4
			♥ A 5
			♦ K 10 7 5 4
			♣ Q 7 6

Double. Worth some action and your planned 1NT would be a poor choice now. 2♦ is still non-forcing but would show a better suit.

² If this gets back to opener or South bids 1♥, 1♠ shows a minimum with 5 spades, 1♥ or pass show other minimums.

Higher Intervention

Light actions can steal the pot, direct the lead or throw a seasoned partnership off the rails. The practitioners are prepared to risk the odd disaster in order to keep the pressure on. This fast and loose style also gives away less information to declarer. And it's fun!

They rarely leave us alone these days, so we need to be comfortable in natural competitive auctions.

The system aims to describe major length quickly, to allow responder to leap in a major. Relays slow the auction down. This is fine given a clear run – let's make sure we reach the right spot – but time and space are important commodities in competition.

Total Tricks (TNT)

In competitive auctions, it is good to be able to convey the nature of your support in case the auction hots up. It's also nice to jump to game on a wide variety of hands and let the opponents guess whether to dispute ownership. This is the big advantage of openings that are limited and descriptive.

We retain much of the structure from the clear run:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	
1♥	2♣	Dbl	takeout, unlimited
		2♦/♠	not forcing
		2♥	could be shaded, 3-4 trumps
		2NT	10-12 balanced, stopper
		3♣	4-card raise to 3♥ or higher
		3♥	"mixed" raise
		4♣	raise with a stiff club
		3♦/3♠	forcing

We gain a cue raise and double to replace relays. The cue shows 4-card support. Double instead with three trumps.

It's similar over a takeout double, with minor changes. 2NT takes the place of a cue raise and jump shifts become invitational.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♥	2♣	?	♠ K 10 6
			♥ A Q 10 3
			♦ 10 6 5 2
			♣ 5 3

Bid 3♣, a good raise to 3♥. Standard stuff. A cue raise shows this or better, remembering that the single raise could be shaded.

It's good to pass on dull hands with length in their suit:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♥	2♦	?	♠ A J 7 6
			♥ Q 9
			♦ Q 8 5 2
			♣ 5 3 2

Pass. The known lack of a spade fit makes this clear-cut opposite 11-15. This flat hand is going nowhere. If partner reopens with a double, bid a quiet 2♠, though pass has appeal.

If partner passes, you are well out of it. Lead a club, not the ♥Q.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♥	2♦	?	♠ 7 6 3
			♥ Q 10 9 7 5
			♦ 7 3
			♣ A 8 5

3♥ shows this, a raise to 2♥ with chunky trumps or short spades. If we take away the ♣A, consider a desperate diversion like 2♠! See *Chapter 11*.

After a 1NT response, opener's double is takeout, suggesting five cards in the major:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ K 10 5	1♥	No	1NT	2♣
♥ A Q J 4 3	?			
♦ K 6 4 3				
♣ 6				

Perfect for double, typically 3-5 majors. Prefer 2♦ with the red suits swapped.

However, if responder had bid a suit or raised hearts, opener's double of an overcall would be penalty. See next chapter.

High power Sputnik

Al Roth reintroduced negative doubles around 1957, the time of the first Sputnik. Playing *High Power* Sputnik, many strong hands have to start with double, because direct suit bids are not forcing.

Double will be one of three hand-types:

Competitive

Responder will have around 7-10 pts and length in the unbid suits, often five cards in opener's denied major:

♠ K 5 4	♠ Q J 8 6 3
♥ A 10 8 7	♥ J 5
♦ J 6	♦ K Q 4 2
♣ A 7 6 3	♣ 10 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♥	2♣	Dbl
2♠		No

Opener shows the cheapest feature for a happy outcome. With this strength and 5-3 majors, responder might have preferred 2♥.

Invitational with three trumps

Playing 4-card majors, good responding hands with three trumps can be awkward. With invitational values or better, responder can start with double to check out the 5-3 fit:

♠ A 7 2	♠ K 6 5
♥ K 10 5 3	♥ A J 4
♦ A 9 6	♦ 4 3
♣ J 3 2	♣ K 10 7 6 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♥	2♦	Dbl
2♠		3♥
No		

Not enough for 3♣, which is forcing. Double is safe enough because opener won't leap to 4♠. It's a problem when opener has a minimum with four hearts, as here. 2NT by opener would show a better hand. 3♥ will be a challenge.

High power

We play negative free bids at the two level. After a limit opening that shows a major, double then a new suit is forcing:

♠ A J 9 4 3	♠ 5 2
♥ K 9	♥ A Q 10 5 3
♦ K 5 4	♦ A Q J 3
♣ 7 3 2	♣ J 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♦	2♣	DbI
2♠		3♥
4♥		No

West rebids the decent 5-card suit then grudgingly raises because 3♥ is forcing. With a 6-carder, East would have bid 3♥ forcing first time. Negative free bids stop at our 2♠:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♦	2♦	?	♠ A 6
			♥ 6 5
			♦ Q 7 4
			♣ K J 8 6 5 3

A pass in tempo, 2NT or a forcing 3♣ overbid? Up to you. They're all dubious. Good to try something with those short hearts.

Natural after we open 1♣

A direct overcall of 1♥ or higher will break the chain. We use the normal methods for strong club systems:

- Suit bids at the 2-level and notrumps show around 4-7 pts, non-forcing.³ Over these, opener's new suit is forcing. 2NT or a raise can be passed.
- Jumps are natural and game-forcing, suggesting a 6-card suit or a chunky 5-carder.
- Double is ambiguous – limited takeout, could be 2-suited – or could be the first move on a strong, flexible hand.
- We play cues as stopper-asks over majors, Michaels (majors) after a 2♣/♦ overcall.
- A jump to 2NT is a natural game force.

3 We actually play and recommend Rubensohl-style transfers after a 1♥/♠ or 2♥/♠ overcall. See *Chapter 13*.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♣	2♣	?	♠ 6 4
			♥ 10 5 3
			♦ K Q 10 7 5 2
			♣ 8 3

Rock bottom for 2♦.

Responder should strive to compete with the right shape:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♣	1♠	?	♠ 6
			♥ K 10 9 5 3
			♦ K 9 7
			♣ 8 3 3 2

2♥ is better than double, focussing on the likely game. You may get to double 2♠ for takeout without overstating your values. If we shuffle the suits to 1-4-3-5 or similar, prefer a first time double.

All this assumes that the chain-breaking overcall (1♥ or higher) was natural. Clearly different if it's a transfer, wonder bid or some unknown 2-suiter. More detail in later chapters.

Is that forcing?

With our negative free bids, 2-over-2 is not forcing but 3-over-2 is. Auctions involving an 11+ relay are similar:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
	1♥	No	1♠ ^R
2♠	No	No	3♦

Forcing, new suit at the 3-level. Compare this to the uncontested auction, when chain breaks are invitational. 2NT or 3♥ would invite.

Same applies when the chain is unbroken:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
	1♥	No	1♠ ^R	♠ A 10 7
2♦	Dbl ^{bal}	No	<u>3♣</u>	♥ A 7
				♦ 8 7
				♣ K J 9 6 4 3

This is forcing. If we swap the black suits, East would have to jump to 3♠ to force, or simply bid 2♥ to continue relay.

Equal Level Conversion

If partner's shape is unknown, double then a new suit shows a flexible hand. This style is well-known and useful and when they open. This is the classic:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
		1♥	Dbl	♠ K Q 6 5
No	2♣	No	?	♥ 5 4
				♦ A Q 10 5 4
				♣ K 3

Double then 2♦ suggests this. The other school says 2♦ here shows a hand too strong to overcall first time. As you wish but "strain before strength" is our motto.

Works the same after our 1♣ opening:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ A Q 6 5	1♣	3♣	No	No
♥ A K 5 4 3	?			
♦ A 4				
♣ 7 3				

Double then 3♥ over 3♦ to show both majors. Likely 4-5, maybe 5-5 and not brave enough to bid 4♣ first time.

Standard reopening theory needs some adjustment.

Naturally, opener will be keen to protect with double in the pass-out seat to cater for partner's penalty pass. However, it usually pays to bid a good 5-card major instead:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ K J 9	1♣	2♦	No	No
♥ A K Q 3 2	?			
♦ 6 3				
♣ A 8 2				

Double looks okay but it won't get you to 2♥. Apart from reaching the wrong partscore in spades, you might find partner passing with 4-4 reds. No, just bid 2♥ and risk the occasional 5-1 fit. This time, the natural bidders are better off.

ELC also applies when responding to 1♣. Double then a suit at the 2-level suggests a 2-suiter and is **passable**:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♣	2♣	?	♠ K J 5 4
			♥ Q 9 7 5 4
			♦ 10 7 5
			♣ 8

Double, then raise a major to game. Bid 2♥ over 2♦ to show this hand – limited with 4-5 majors or similar.

That's easy but it would be hazardous to double a natural 2♦ overcall, since opener's likely 3♣ rebid would fix you.

The awkward choice over 2♦ lies between pass, 2♥ or a frisky 3♦ Michaels.

Many strong responding hands start with double:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
	1♣	2♦	Dbl	♠ 5 4
No	2♠	No	?	♥ K J 9 5 3
				♦ 8 2
				♣ A J 6 3

2♥ over 2♦ would not be forcing. 3♥ first time is possible but suggests a 1-suiter with a better suit – happy to be raised on honour doubleton.

Double is more flexible, followed by 3♥ forcing now. (Not ELC when it's 3-over-2) Clearly opener needs to be sensitive and not jump directly to 4♠ on a 5-card suit.

Double could be a 1-suiter if the shunned bid would have been above 3NT:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	3♠	Dbl	No
4♣	No	4♦	

This could be a 1-suiter. East was doubtless hoping for a spade stopper. (See next page) Of course 4-5 in the reds is possible (ELC) so opener can bid 4♥ with three of them.

Looking for 3NT

Here is an idea associated with Marty Bergen. Responder should be loathe to bypass 3NT with a long minor. Therefore double of a 3-level preempt looks as much for a stopper as the unbid major. Take this:

♠ A J 9 3	♠ 7 5		
♥ K J 8	♥ 6 3		
♦ A 9	♦ K Q 10 6 5 4		
♣ K 7 4 3	♣ A 6 5		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	3♥	Dbl	No
?			

It's now or never. East doubles principally as a stopper ask and West applies the Hamman Rule⁴. This works a treat here but it could end in tears if East has a weakish 4-1-4-4, though a 4♥ cue might get you back on track. No guarantees.

Cue as a choice of games

We use cues principally to get us to the right game, not as slam tries.

♠ K 10 8 7 6	♠ A 5		
♥ 7 2	♥ Q 8		
♦ A 8 5	♦ K J 4		
♣ A K 9	♣ Q 10 6 5 4 3		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	
1♦	3♥	Dbl	
4♥		5♣	

East hoped for a heart stopper opposite. West was too good for 3♠, so passed the buck via 4♥.

Here endeth the basic system – simple but accurate, modern but sound. Just fine for 90% of auctions. Those who wish to hone the remaining 10% or find out more about modern relay methods are welcome to plough ahead to *Fine Tuning*.

4 I don't believe you. Everyone knows it.

Invitational for us

W/Both

	♠ Q 7 4	
	♥ J 7	
	♦ A J 10 6 3 2	
	♣ K 5	
♠ A 10 6		♠ 8 2
♥ A K 3		♥ 10 8 5
♦ 8 7 4		♦ K Q 5
♣ A Q 8 2		♣ J 10 6 4 3
	♠ K J 9 5 3	
	♥ Q 9 6 4 2	
	♦ 9	
	♣ 9 7	

WEST
1♣
3NT

NORTH
2♦
End

EAST
2NT

SOUTH
No

East would probably pass a 1NT rebid but ♦KQx is worth an invite after North's overcall. 2NT showed 5-7 so West had a close decision. Three aces swung it.

(Give West ♠KQxx instead, then 3NT might fail)

Get the defence right

W/Nil

	♠ A K 7	
	♥ 9 6	
	♦ 8 5	
	♣ K J 9 5 4 3	
♠ J 10		♠ 9 8 6 2
♥ K J 7 3 2		♥ 10 8
♦ Q 7 2		♦ K J 10 6 4 3
♣ A 8 2		♣ 10
	♠ Q 5 4 3	
	♥ A Q 5 4	
	♦ A 9	
	♣ Q 7 6	

WEST
1♥

NORTH
2♣

EAST
2♦

SOUTH
3NT

If you pass as East, partner is not likely to lead a diamond. If you bid on your 4-count, the worst you can do is -130.

Second Section

Fine Tuning

Optional extras and clarifications. We play most of this stuff but we've had accidents – be warned.

10 More doubles

The well-defined hand – we have a fit – takeout doubles – fit doubles – doubles of artificial bids

11 Raises

Jump shifts – splimits – after a single raise – canapé game tries – 2NT as a raise

12 Style counsel

Choice of games – switching horses – the denied major – range probe – 7 trumps are plenty – evaluation

13 Bright ideas

ASPRO – alternatives over 1NT & 2NT – uses for 2NT in competition – chain breaks opposite balanced hands – Rubensohl – 1♣ : 1♦ positive

14 More slams

Kontrols – zooming to a threshold – fine tuning DCB – 4♦ end signal (or MST) – slams in competition – Michaels & minors – cues in competition

15 They open

More on Aspro – we overcall – they open a strong club – cues – we double – dealing with Multis - cardplay

Chapter 10

More doubles

High power negative doubles and negative free bids go well with a strong club system. Once you agree the level (we play non-forcing free bids at the 2-level ¹ and takeout doubles to 4♥) you have an effective method for most competitive auctions.

The well-defined hand

We all overbid these days and seem to survive. The risk becomes lower each year, as the penalty double is driven from the game.

Remnants surface rarely – after 1NT is doubled, or when somebody oversteps against a preempt. If your partner opens a weak 2♠ and the next player overcalls 3♣, the world plays double by you as penalty, because opener's hand is *well-defined*.

Our structure of opening bids allow us to retain more penalty doubles, though opportunities remain rare.

The Scamp openings from 1NT up say a lot about strength and shape. When one hand is *well-defined*, double by partner is penalty. Take this:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
2♣	2♠	?	♠ K 10 7 3
			♥ A J 4 3 2
			♦ K 3
			♣ 10 7

Double for penalty. Opener will pass most of the time. The Standard pair at the other table will be doing well to match this result.

A direct 3♥ by East would be forcing.

1 After our 1NT gets overcalled, 3-over-2 is non-forcing, leaving the cue to take care of the strong hands, though these days we play *Rubensohl* transfers instead. See *Chapter 13*.

A hand qualifies as well-defined when it's limited, with two known "features". Such as:

- two known suits, not balanced
- length (5+) in a suit, plus a *denied major*
For instance, any two opening; or a negative free bid opposite a partner who has shown a suit
- a 1-suited hand (6+)
- balanced with no major

All the openings from 1NT up fit the bill ². Opposite any well-defined hand, double is penalty. (Except – When a player has made a takeout double of a suit, subsequent doubles of that suit are still takeout, even when partner's hand **becomes** well-defined)

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ A Q 6 5 4	1♦	No	2♦	3♣
♥ K 10 5	?			
♦ 5				
♣ K J 9 3				

Double. East has a *well-defined hand* – limited, long diamonds and short spades. West needs a hand as good as this to double since partner may not contribute much. Four chunky trumps for starters.

The Denied Major

It's different if the overcall comes in opener's denied major. Same hand, different overcall:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ A Q 6 5 4	1♦	No	2♦	2♥
♥ K 10 5	?			
♦ 5				
♣ K J 9 3				

The denied major principle changes things. A hand that has denied four cards in a suit **cannot** make a penalty double of that suit. Double would be takeout, so West passes.

If East then doubles 2♥ for takeout, West can either pass or chicken out to 3♣.

2 1♠ is on the cusp. We play double opposite a 1♠ opening as *co-operative*. See later in the chapter.

We show a fit

After we find a fit, double is usually penalty. Some of these doubles are *co-operative* in nature – when they too have a fit, or the doubler sits under the length.

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ K 10 6	1♥	No	2♥	3♣
♥ A J 6 5	?			
♦ A 3				
♣ Q 10 8 2				

Double is clear. You hope that partner has raised on three. The actual hand was something like this:

W/Both	♠ J 9 4 2	
	♥ Q 8 7 2	
	♦ Q 9 8 4	
	♣ 4	
♠ K 10 6		♠ A 8 5 3
♥ A J 6 5		♥ K 10 4
♦ A 3		♦ J 10 7 5
♣ Q 10 8 2		♣ 9 6
	♠ Q 7	
	♥ 9 3	
	♦ K 6 2	
	♣ A K J 7 5 3	

2♥ would have made eight or nine tricks; 3♣x went for 800 on routine defence.

If we move West's ♣2 to diamonds, it would be aggressive but tempting to double. With a more offensive hand – say six hearts – West can bid 3♥ over 3♣ to compete on TNT grounds, while 3♦ would be a random game try.

If their bid prevents a game try, three of our suit is invitational, double is still penalty. In other words, we don't play *maximal overcall doubles*, unless the opponents have also shown a fit. Why not? Because our possible 4-3 fit makes a damaging misfit more likely.

Again, if South overcalls 2♠ it all changes. Double by West would be takeout. 1-4-4-4 would be ideal.

It's our hand

In some auctions, double or redouble claims ownership of the hand. For instance:

WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♥	1NT	Dbl

Nothing radical here. Responder is keen to defend, typically 10+. Either we double them or we play the hand. Thereafter, most doubles by both partners are penalty, even under the length.

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ 6	1♥	1NT	Dbl	2♣/♦/♠
♥ A J 10 6 5	?			
♦ A J 3				
♣ K 10 9 4				

West can double any action by South, remembering that double of 2♠ is takeout, West having denied four of them.

Over their 1NT **opening**, double is penalty. However, because it's an expression of hope rather than a statement of combined assets, partner's double of a runout is needed to show "values", takeout-ish in principle.

Other co-operative doubles

Co-operative doubles apply beyond the agreed level of takeout doubles. For instance:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♣ ¹⁶⁺	4♠	?	♠ Q 8
			♥ A 9 2
			♦ K 10 5 4 3
			♣ J 7 6

Double shows *transferable values* to use the approved term. That is, a hand good for offence or defence, so tolerance for the unbid suits plus a few *cover cards*.

Admittedly this method doesn't look so good when responder has a shape like 0-4-4-5. We have no strong feelings on the cut-off point for takeout doubles – you have to draw the line somewhere. Some pairs choose 7♥!

The 1♠ opening falls between two stools – two suits are known but 4-4-3-2 has little in common with 5-5-0-3. To retain some flexibility, double is co-operative:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♠	2♦	?	♠ J 10
			♥ A 8 4
			♦ K 10 3
			♣ Q 6 4 3 2

Double shows this. You expect partner to pass with a balanced hand or bid a 5-card major, as over the 1NT response.

When an opponent makes a natural call in opener's forced 4-card major, double by responder is takeout. We believe them.

They have a fit

TNT tells us that fits come in pairs. When they freely bid and raise a suit, double is takeout.

Double by a limited opener suggests extra length in the anchor suit:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ 6 5	1♥	1♠	2♦	2♠
♥ A J 10 8 6	<u>Dbl</u>			
♦ K 6				
♣ K Q 6 3				

This takeout double implies long hearts. 3♣ instead would be canapé. Incidentally, 2NT would show a diamond fit for us. See *Chapter 11*.

That's easy. West would clearly have to pass if South leapt to 4♠. Let's change things up:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ 6 5	1♥	1♠	<u>2♣</u>	4♠
♥ A J 10 8 6	?			
♦ K 6				
♣ K Q 6 3				

Your simple choices are to pass or take the plunge in 5♣. It doesn't make much sense for double to be takeout.

We like double to show club support. See next.

Fit doubles

If they raise a suit to 3♥ or higher, we use double to show support and invitational values. It's more common when they open:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♠	2♣	3♠	?	♠ 7 3
				♥ A 5 3
				♦ K J 6 5
				♣ K 7 6 5

Double shows club support and a good hand. It's basically a stopper ask. 4♣ instead would be *mixed* – a more shapely hand with fewer high cards.

Also applies when we open. This happened recently:

W/EW	♠ K Q J		
	♥ Q 10 9 5		
	♦ 6 3 2		
	♣ A 9 4		
♠ A 4			♠ 7 2
♥ 8			♥ K J 7 4
♦ A K J 5			♦ 10 8 7
♣ K 10 8 7 6 5			♣ Q J 3 2
	♠ 10 9 8 6 5 3		
	♥ A 6 3 2		
	♦ Q 9 4		
	♣ —		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣ ¹⁶⁺	No	1♦	2♠
3♣	4♠	Dbl	End

East has useful cards but not enough shape to bid at the 5-level. Maybe if the ♠2 were elsewhere. Pass is fine but double to show a good negative with some clubs is acceptable.

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ 5 4	1♣	1♠	2♥ ^{non-f}	4♠
♥ A Q 6 5	Dbl			
♦ K J 10 4				
♣ A K 7				

This double shows heart support. It can't be right for West to plunge into 5♥ on a flat hand with four trumps. Double feeds information

that will help partner to judge the TNT. This auction is not forcing but we also use these special fit doubles in forcing auctions.

They don't apply if partner's hand is well-defined. (Weak jump overcall or weak preempt) Then double is penalty.

Both sides have fits

East would be sorely tempted to bid here:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
			1♥	♠ 6
1♠	3♥/4♥	4♠	?	♥ AK 10 5 3
				♦ A J 8 6 2
				♣ 8 2

The stiff spade, extra trump length and 5-5 shape suggest this could be the time to bid at the 5-level. As you wish, but 5♥ won't fare well if partner turns up with 4-4-1-4 or similar.

It's important for East not to get in partner's way. It could be right to play at the five level but this is rarely East's decision to take.

We like double to say "I want to bid at the five level". Applies in the **direct** seat, when both sides have shown fit and partner has made a **general** raise – be it cue, mixed or value. (However, a splinter raise or a fit-showing jump is a **defined** raise. Then double is penalty)

We regard a **preempt to game** by an opponent as a "self-fit":

♠ —	♠ 7 5 2		
♥ Q 10 5 3	♥ A 9 6 2		
♦ 7 4 3 2	♦ J 5		
♣ A K Q 10 5	♣ J 8 4 2		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	No	2♥	4♠
Dbl		4NT	
5♣	Dbl	End	

At favourable vulnerability, West was tempted to bid a unilateral 5♣ but thought better of it. Might not partner have long spades and three hearts? Double of their "fit" showed a hand with high ODR³, so East checked for canapé clubs on the way to 5♥.

"I want to bid"

N/Both	♠ 8	
	♥ K Q 10 5	
	♦ A Q J 8 7 3	
	♣ 5 2	
♠ A Q 10 6		♠ K J 9 4 2
♥ 9 3		♥ J 7
♦ 9 2		♦ K 10 6
♣ J 9 7 4 3		♣ A 8 6
	♠ 7 5 3	
	♥ A 8 6 4 2	
	♦ 5 4	
	♣ K Q 10	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	1♠	3♥ ^{mixed}
4♠	Dbl	End	

North wants to bid at the 5-level but probably shouldn't. +500 vs 4♠x is par. North needs a bit more shape to act in front of partner, say swapping the red suits. South led the ♣K, a bit unlucky but +200 was still okay.

The auction has the tinge of retrospective masterminding. North was indeed lucky that South had two small opposite the chunky 6-carder.

At the other table:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	1♠	Dbl
4♠	5♥	End	

This North felt that she couldn't hide KQTx in partner's suit. Fair enough. Perhaps double would be penalty.

5♥ is a fair spot so perhaps there is nothing to learn. On the other hand, if the ♦K is onside that's one more undertrick in 4♠x.

Or perhaps South just needs to think more about opening leads.

Lead-directing doubles

We are obliged to open poor suits so responder should think twice before leading opener's forced major. With this in mind, what does it mean when a 1♥ opener doubles 3NT?

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ J 5	1♥	1NT	No	3NT
♥ Q 10 5 4	?			
♦ A K Q 9 4 3				
♣ 7				

A canapé nightmare. You could play double as “Try to find my long minor” but we prefer the usual “We have good chances if you lead a heart.” Here you pass and hope partner's lead won't blow the defence. If you can't stand the suspense, take the dive.

Doubles of cue bids show good, long suits. However, if we overcall, or open two of something, double of a cue bid or 3NT says “Lead something else.” The assumption is that partner will usually lead your 5+ suit, unless you double to **deflect**.

Doubles of artificial bids

This is dealt with in *Chapter 15 – They Open*, though opponents also like to air their multis over our 1♣ and 1NT openings. This is a summary:

- If their artificial bid shows one suit (transfers) double is takeout of the shown suit.
- If the bid show two suits (Landy) double shows "values"; bids in their 4+ suits are natural.
- If it's a Multi, double is takeout of the higher suit (spades) and the **step** is takeout of the other suit.
- If their call shows some 1-suiter (Cappelletti or DONT) double is values, system ON.
- vs RCO Twos (say 1♠/2♠ = blacks or reds), double shows some length in the **bid** suit and its companion. (So blacks in this case)

Walked into it

E/NS

♠ 7 6
 ♥ J 8 5 4
 ♦ 7 6 4
 ♣ A 9 6 4

♠ K Q 8 5 4
 ♥ A Q 6
 ♦ J 5 3
 ♣ 10 3

♠ 3
 ♥ 9 7 3
 ♦ A Q 10 8
 ♣ K J 8 7 2

♠ A J 10 9 2
 ♥ K 10 2
 ♦ K 9 2
 ♣ Q 5

WEST

NORTH

EAST

SOUTH

Dbl

End

2♣

2♠

Perhaps South should have passed with that balanced hand and thus avoided -800. At tables where South got to open 1♠, many Easts contented themselves with 2♣.

Chapter 11

Raises

Most auctions to game go via relays, though some strong hands with primary support do better to raise straight away. These are our options with support:

1♥	1♠	most good hands, including dull limit raises
2♥		(6) 7-10 TP, 3-4 trumps
2NT		splinter raise, or a good limit+ raise
3♥		shapely, "mixed" raise
3NT		not a raise for us – gambling, short hearts
4♣/♦		fit-showing jumps, 4+ trumps
4♥		wide-range

If your partner is a Bergen fan, I guess you could adapt those. Presumably 3♣/♦/♥ would all show 5-card support to guarantee a 9-card fit. No thanks.

A similar scheme applies after intervention, with a cue raise or double on most hands that would relay. 2NT is natural.

Jump shifts

We used to play these as "fit-suggesting" usually 3-6 shape and invitational values. Too rare, so we now play them as invitational 6-carders, shortish in opener's major:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♥	?	♠ 8 6
		♥ 4
		♦ AK 4 3
		♣ K J 10 9 7 3

Too good for 2♣, while relaying with 1♠ could come unstuck.¹ Opener can show a stopper.

If we take away a club or a king, then 2♣.

¹ For instance if partner bids 3♦ (yuk) or the next hand bids 2♠.

After an overcall, jump shifts become **forcing**, to avoid overloading double:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♥	1♠	?	♠ 6 3
			♥ A 3
			♦ A Q 10 9 4 3
			♣ K 10 3

3♦, no heart fit implied. Bid 2♦ without the ♥A.

Close calls

In deciding how to raise and how high, look at the denied major and trump texture. Partner opens 1♥. What do you do?

♠ A 9 5 4 ♥ K 10 5 4 3 ♦ 5 4 ♣ 7 2

3♥. We used to play this as purely preemptive but there's little mileage in that. When you bid on nothing, they make whatever they bid and you sideline partner. These days we play it as *mixed*: 6-10 TP (say 8-9 losers), five trumps or chunky four card support. Add the hands with four trumps and shortish spades, on TNT principles.

♠ 9 5 ♥ J 9 7 5 3 ♦ J 10 7 3 ♣ 8 5

You need an agreed policy with trash like this. If you are not vulnerable and can't bring yourself to pass, feel free to psyche – 1♠, 1NT, 2♦ – or bid an **honest** 2♠². 3♥ never worked for us.

A minimum single raise suggests four trumps:

♠ K 10 4 3 ♥ 10 5 4 K 10 7 4 ♣ 9 3

Looks like a pass of 1♥. We'd like another honour or another heart to raise. If we add an ace:

♠ A 8 6 5 ♥ 9 7 2 ♦ Q 10 7 4 ♣ A 3

Stoppers and three small trumps suggest 1NT but will likely miss a 5-3 heart fit. Game is a chance so slightly prefer 2♥ – a single raise shows a good hand!

2 If you fancy 2♠, partner needs to have the Alert card ready, and have "pre-alerted". 2♠ would be explained as "Natural, non-forcing; occasionally a weakish hand, short in spades." (**Any** bid in a denied major is suspect)

♠ A10 4 3 ♥ K Q J 6 ♦ 9 7 5 ♣ A 3

4♥, 1♠ or 2NT. This is the luxury of a strong club system. If you steam straight to game on this, the fourth player may play you for a more shapely hand with fewer high cards, which will prove costly for him. What about slam? Yes, partner could have

♠ K Q 2 ♥ A10 9 8 4 ♦ 8 ♣ K 8 7 4

so it's probably right to take it slowly, via 2NT. If in doubt, apply a version of Jeff Rubens' rule "Investigate if slam is laydown opposite the perfect 5431 minimum."

Splinter Raises – Splimits

Traditional limit raises are of little use on hands with four trumps and a side singleton – opener can only guess how well the hands fit. It's better to just blast game. For those who prefer a bit of science, the idle 2NT response can be used to show an invitational raise:

1♦ ^{spades}	2NT	<i>limit plus, often a splinter</i>
3♣ [?]	3♦/♥	shortage
	3♠	club shortage, limited
	3NT	square game raise, choice of games
	4♣	club splinter, good hand
	4♦/♥	not sure
	4♠	balanced-ish raise

Responder will have four trumps and eight losers, around 11-13 TP. It's also good to splinter with a shapely game force, rather than relay. This hand shows why:

♠ A J 9 2	♠ K Q 6 5 4
♥ K 8	♥ A 6 5 4
♦ J 8 7	♦ 4
♣ K J 6 4	♣ A Q 5

If East relays to find partner with a 4-2-3-4 minimum, it's not clear to plunge into DCB. If partner has

♠ A J 9 2 ♥ Q 8 ♦ K Q 7 ♣ J 10 6 4

you will sometimes fail in 5♠ for no good reason. Relay is slow to pick up on wasted strength opposite a shortage.

This is a better auction:

1♦	2NT	
3♣?	3♦	
3♥ (or 4♣)	4NT	etc

West makes a courtesy cue with no wastage opposite a diamond shortage, so East presses the button. In general, **avoid relay on hands with good support and a singleton**.

Opener doesn't have to ask for shortage. Sign-off with a bare minimum, or show your own shortage via 3♦/♥/4♣.

We use the same method over a 1♥ opening, except that responder can't invite with a stiff spade. This is not such a loss – why tell the opponents they have a 9-card spade fit?

We also use 2NT on a balanced nearly-game raise. This gives an embarrassed opener an out, might get you to 3NT:

♠ K 8	♠ A Q 3
♥ A 7 6 5	♥ K 8 3 2
♦ A 5 4	♦ 10 7 2
♣ 9 7 6 4	♣ A 10 5

WEST	EAST
1♥ !?	2NT
3♥	No

West probably should not have opened and rebids 3♥ to apologise. East could have relayed, planning to invite over 2♣ but this 13-count is a bit too good.

After a single raise

A raise of a major (1♥ : 2♥ or 1♦ : 2♠) shows (6) 7-10 TP, typically nine losers, sometimes 3-card support. In these auctions, opener should pass routinely with most flat hands, though a good, balanced-ish 15-count is worth 2NT after a heart raise, particularly vulnerable at IMPs. Other trial bids show shapely hands:

2♥	1♥	
	2♠	start of a short suit trial, 5+♥s
	2NT	(semi) balanced 15-count (vul, IMPs)
	3♣,♦	canapé tries, not forcing
	3♥	invitational; 5+♥s, no shortage

The short suit trial shows a singleton somewhere and implies five trumps. Responder can bid the step to ask where:

	1♥	
2♥	2♠	
2NT?	3♣/♦	shortage
	3♥	spade shortage

Once in a while you will reach one of those of magic games where responder has four small opposite opener's singleton. Couldn't find one from recent play, so here's a contrived example:

♠ A 9 5	♠ K J 10 8
♥ K Q 10 5 4	♥ A J 3
♦ 7	♦ 8 6 5 4
♣ A J 7 6	♣ 10 3

WEST	EAST
1♥	2♥
2♠	2NT?
3♦	4♥

The gains have tended to come from avoiding games doomed by chunky length opposite shortage, (swap East's spades & diamonds) or from reaching 3NT with KQTx opposite opener's singleton.

We use a similar scheme after a 1♦ opening:

	1♦	
2♠	2NT	shortage somewhere
	3♣/♦	canapé try
	3♥	5+♠s, balanced-ish
	3♠	preemptive in principle

We don't need to give opener a balanced invite with a flat maximum. Responder would have bid 1♥ with a good 10-count, rather than raise directly, so there's no risk of missing the routine 3NT with 15 opposite 10.

The same scheme applies when the spade raise follows a 1♣ opening³.

3 Opener does not need 2NT to show 18-19 flat, since these hands would rebid 1♥ or 1NT, not 1♠.

Canapé game tries

While we don't often play 3NT on power after a single raise of a major, there could be nine tricks if opener has a big canapé hand:

♠ K 3	♠ 5 4 2
♥ A J 7 5	♥ K 10 4
♦ 5	♦ K 7 6 4
♣ K Q J 6 5 4	♣ A 3 2

WEST	EAST
1♥	2♥
3♣	3♦
3NT	No

Canapé tries are not forcing. Take away an honour and East would pass 3♣. With four hearts, East chooses between 3♥ and 4♥.

That worked because opener had a chunky 6-carder. 5-4 canapé hands can be awkward if the 5-carder is weak:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	EAST
♠ K Q 10 4	1♦	2♠
♥ A K 5	?	
♦ 9		
♣ K 10 8 6 5		

Bit of a canapé mess. Worth game if partner has four trumps but you don't fancy 4♠ in a 4-3 fit on a diamond lead. We would try 3♣ and risk playing there. If partner returns to 3♠ (in tempo!) that should be four trumps, though a minimum. Probably press on.

What if partner has 3-4-5-1?

Tricky, though a 3-card raise should be 8-10.

After a positive to 1♣

Opener can raise responder's major (1♣ : 1♥ : 2♠ or 1♣ : 1♠ : 2♥) on a balanced minimum with four trumps, still game-forcing. Responder has the usual gadgets available: step = start of a short suit trial; new suits are likely canapés.

A jump raise would be 5-card support, or very chunky four.

1♣ : 1♥/♠ : 2NT is a splinter raise.

Partner opens 1♠

Since opener shows two suits, some jumps need to be clarified. Four of a minor shows support for spades. With heart support and a limit raise, bid 2NT.

1♠ ^{majors}	2♥	preference, 5-10 TP
	2♠	(6)7-10 TP
	2NT	limit raise to 3♥ or higher
	3♣/3♦	invitational (3♣ could be stretch)
	3♥/♠	mixed raises
	4♣/♦	fit jumps with four <u>spades</u>

Same applies after an overcall, so 2NT is still a heart raise. Make a co-operative double on hands worth 2NT.

2NT as a raise

We like to have two ways to compete to the 3-level – invitational and competitive. If their suit ranks below partner's, responder has a cue raise available. In the few auctions where this is not possible, we use 2NT instead:

WEST	NORTH	EAST
2♣/♦	2♥/♠	2NT

Careful. 2NT shows a bad raise. A direct raise is constructive, say 9-12 TP. This is counter-intuitive but it avoids playing 3NT from the wrong side when opener has extras with a positional stopper.

Responder can also bid 2NT on hands that want to compete in a long suit, Lebensohl-style. (Negative free bids end at 2♠)

It's different with majors, because 3NT is not really an option. We switch the meanings – a direct raise is competitive. 2NT takes the place of the cue raise, inviting game:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♥	2♠	?	♠ K 6
			♥ A J 7 5
			♦ 7 6 5
			♣ K 10 6 5

2NT shows this. Hope you both remember! If we remove a king, bid a competitive 3♥.

Only a 2♠ overcall necessitates this treatment. Over 2♦ by North, 2NT is natural, 3♦ a good raise and 3♥ mixed.

Here's another:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ 10 5	1♥	No	2♣	2♠
♥ K 10 8 4	<u>2NT</u>			
♦ A 6 3				
♣ K J 6 4				

If South had passed, 2NT by West would be a natural game try. After the overcall, 2NT shows a competitive raise while 3♣ would be invitational. Add an ace to the hand above:

♠ 10 5 ♥ A Q 8 4 ♦ A 6 3 ♣ K J 6 4

3♣. Worth an invite now. Partner will have a go with a spade stopper and six clubs to the ace.

It may not seem worthwhile to make an exception of these few auctions. Perhaps, but we use the same method in auctions where they open:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	2♦	2♥	<u>2NT</u>

South shows a weakish raise to 3♦. A direct 3♦ is invitational and double shows the black suits. More in *Chapter 15 – They Open*.

If East had raised to 3♥, double would show a defensive raise, as per the previous chapter.

Some reminders ...

If they raise a suit to 3♥ or higher, we use double to show support and invitational values. These *fit-doubles* don't apply if partner's hand is well-defined. Then double is penalty.

When they bid at the 2-level, there are always two ways to reach three of our fit.

Shortage beats relay again

♠ A 7 5 4	♠ K Q 8 3
♥ 3	♥ 10 5
♦ A J 3 2	♦ K Q 8
♣ K Q J 2	♣ A 10 8 4

WEST	EAST
1♦	2NT ^{limit+}
3♥ ^{shortage}	4♣
4♦	4NT
5♥	6♠

We have found that these strongish, balanced hands with good support go better via 2NT. 6♠ was okay because trumps were 3-2. 6♣ was too tough for the field to find.

Good and bad raises

W/Both	♠ A Q J 9 4 2	
	♥ A J 3	
	♦ 8 7	
	♣ J 5	
♠ 3		♠ K 10 6 5
♥ K 10 2		♥ 7 6 5 4
♦ A K 9 6 3 2		♦ Q 10 5
♣ K 9 8		♣ A 7
	♠ 8 7	
	♥ Q 9 8	
	♦ J 4	
	♣ Q 10 6 4 3 2	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♦	2♠	3♦ ⁹⁻¹²	No
3♥	No	3NT	End

West has too much to pass opposite a constructive raise but not quite enough to think that 3NT would have nine runners opposite a spade stopper. Hence passing the buck with 3♥.

If we remove an honour from East's hand then East bids 2NT instead, to play and make 3♦.

Fit jump

W/Both	♠ K J 9 4 3	
	♥ 3	
	♦ A 7 3	
	♣ J 10 6 5	
♠ A 6 2		♠ 5
♥ A 10 9 2		♥ K J 6 5 4
♦ K 9 8 6		♦ Q J 5 4 2
♣ 8 2		♣ A 7
	♠ Q 10 8 7	
	♥ Q 8 7	
	♦ 10	
	♣ K Q 9 4 3	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	1♠	4♦	4♠
5♦	No	5♥	End

East figured that South was about to bid 4♠, so chose the bid that might help partner to work out the TNT.

Declarer would have needed to pick trumps on a black suit lead but North thoughtfully led ♦A another, so there were no problems.

East had other choices – 4♥ or 3♠ – but both might have seen them defending 4♠ for -620.

Sure, 3♠ then 5♥ would have worked this time, striking the double fit. Not so good if opener's minor is clubs.

Chapter 12

Style counsel

Standard and Acol players receive advice from articles, bidding forums and each other.

Relay pairs need special guidance. It won't do to plonk relay mechanics on top of tried and true bidding principles, like "Play 3NT with two balanced hands and no 8-card major fit".

If you think of relay as a method that takes 10 bids to reach the same contracts as everyone else, you should stick to Standard.

Choice of games

Choosing the right game can be a challenge. Sometimes the asker can tell that 3NT will be better than four of a major, despite a 4-4 fit.

♠ Q 9 7 3	♠ K 5 4 2
♥ K Q 10 7	♥ A 3
♦ K 8	♦ Q J 7 2
♣ K Q 7	♣ J 3 2
1♠ ^R	1♦ spades
2♦ ^R	2♣ balanced
2NT ^R	2♠ & diamonds
3NT	3♣ 4-2-4-3

A 4-4 fit but the rest steers West towards 3NT – weak trumps, soft values and three 6-card side-fits. The fact that the opponents have no 8-card fit to lead makes this clear-cut.

A frequent platitude from Standard players is "Don't Stayman with 4-triple 3". This is shallow thinking, born of inadequate methods:

♠ K Q 9 5	♠ A J 3 2
♥ A 8	♥ 7 4 2
♦ A 8 6	♦ K Q 5
♣ K 10 7 2	♣ J 3 2
1NT ¹⁵⁻¹⁷	3NT

East recites the mantra and raises West's strong notrump to game, then shrugs shoulders when North leads a heart for one off. The killers here are West's good spades and the thin 3-2 side suit. East will often be right to blast 3NT but relay wins out this time.

It can be important to avoid 3NT despite no proper fit. Take this Standard auction:

♠ A 6 3	♠ K 5 4 2
♥ K Q 9 7 2	♥ A 3
♦ A 8	♦ 10 4
♣ 9 8 7	♣ K Q J 5 3
WEST	EAST
1♥	2♣
2NT	3♠
3NT	No

It's tough to blame East because West is just as likely to have

♠ Q 6 3 ♥ Q 9 7 5 2 ♦ A J 8 ♣ A 7

when anything but 3NT is silly. Maybe West should bid 4♣ over 3♠ with the first hand. Don't ask us – give it to some bidding forum.

The relay pair should reach 4♥ when West holds the first hand. East realises that 3NT will need a nine running tricks plus a diamond stopper. When shape-showing reveals that the opponents have a 9-card fit to lead, consider a suit game.

Switching horses

Two relays establishes a 3N-force. Then relayer sometimes has room to go natural and get partner involved:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	EAST	
♠ A Q J 4		1♥	
♥ 5	1♠ ^R	2♣	balanced
♦ K J 5 4 2	2♦ ^R	2♠	diamonds
♣ K 10 4	?		

Hearts could be the problem so try 3♦.¹

The breakout suggests doubts about strain, often a heart shortage.

1 In relay auctions, we use immediate 3-level breaks opposite balanced hands to show splinters, even in partner's suit. See next chapter.

Opener is expected to show stoppers up the line. You'll bid 3NT over 3♥ but reach 5♦ if partner bids 3♠ with something like this:

♠ K 7 2 ♥ J 7 6 4 ♦ A Q 6 3 ♣ Q 7

That was easy. Sometimes the relayar must weigh the crudeness of grinding it out against the risk of playing a game in partscore:

♠ 10 5	♠ 9 2	
♥ A 9 6	♥ Q J 3	
♦ A Q 9 4 2	♦ K 8	
♣ Q J 6	♣ A K 10 9 5 3	
WEST	EAST	
	2♣	
2♦ ^R	2♠	high shortage
3♣	3♦	stopper
3♥	4♥	
5♣	No	

A lucky start for West, since the 2♠ response left room to invite. Then the problem with 3NT came to light. We admit that natural bidders would have few problems with these cards.

If West prefers to continue relay with 2NT over 2♠, it's not so easy to reach 3NT when it's right – say the ♠A instead of the ♦K.

Offering a choice with 3NT

Texture is a toughy. Standard players have the advantage here but relay still has a few tricks.

WEST'S HAND	WEST	EAST	
♠ A 10 4 3		1♥	
♥ 5 4	1♠ ^R	2♠	HS
♦ K Q 5 4	2NT ^R	3♣	2-6-2-3 / 2-6-3-2
♣ A J 9	?		

4♥ is okay but you'd prefer 3NT if partner's hearts are moderate. To play 3NT regardless, West relays again to get the complete shape then signs off in 3NT. After that, East will pass unless the suit is exceptional, say ♥KQJT63.

With the actual hand, West can bid 3NT over 3♣ to offer a choice. This says "Pass unless your hearts are good enough to play opposite two small or a stiff honour." In **relay** auctions, a late break before resolution involves partner.

It's different in natural, **competitive** auctions.

A delayed 3NT in competition is co-operative, while a direct 3NT is gambling and terminal. For instance:

WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♥	2♣	3NT

"Please pass". Taking the slow road to 3NT would suggest a balanced-ish hand with heart tolerance.

Chain breaks – F2NPR

After a 1♣ opening, there is no compulsion to reach game with 16 opposite 8 and no fit, remembering it could even be 15 opposite 7 if both have taken a rosy view of their decent 5-card suits. Opener can break the chain with an awkward minimum, shortish in responder's suit.²

Such auctions are *Forcing to 2NT, Preference or Repeat (F2NPR)*. That is, either partner can pass preference or the simple repeat of a shown suit – if beyond 2NT – though not a raise.

1♣	1NT ^R	3N-force, so virtually game-forcing
	2♣/♦/♠	shapely minimums, F2NPR
		(then responder's 2NT is forcing) ³
	2♥	flat minimum GF with 4-card support
	2NT	splinter raise
	3♣/♦/♠	semi-solid suits
	3♥	chunky trumps, invites a cue

After a break into a suit, the bidding can sometimes grind to a halt at the 3-level:

♠ AK 8 7 5	♠ 9
♥ 8 2	♥ A Q 9 6 5 4
♦ AK 5	♦ Q 7 3
♣ J 10 2	♣ 9 5 4
1♣	1♠ ^{hearts}
2♣	3♥
No	

2 Some pairs play these breaks as shape showing, "reverse relay".

3 2NT is invitational if bid by – or opposite – a hand **known to be balanced**, or as a raise.

To be honest, we haven't found much use for this delicate braking mechanism.

Breaks opposite balanced hands

On the other hand, we can sometimes stop in 2NT on flat 24-25 counts. After a 2♣ response (8+ flat) opener can bid 2NT on a bare minimum to invite. Another plus for this is the ability to cool partner's heels on slam hands, when relaying could lead to an unwanted resurrection.

Breaks to 2♥/♠ are F2NPR. Could be a balanced minimum with a 4-card suit, maybe planning to pass 2NT. It's like responding to Stayman after a 16-18 notrump.⁴

More likely is a hand with doubts about strain:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	EAST
♠ A J 10 6 4	1♣	2♣
♥ A 10 2	?	
♦ 6 5		
♣ A K 5		

It looks normal to press the relay button to extract 3-card spade support but that's not so clear opposite 2-4-3-4 or similar:

♠ K 5	♥ K J 7 3	♦ 8 7 2	♣ Q 10 7 6
-------	-----------	---------	------------

We'll take our chances in 4♠. Responder would bid 3♣ over West's 2♠ for a happy outcome.

With the ♠K in diamonds, East would bid 3NT.

Responses to these chain breaks are natural-ish, hardly worth another table:

1♣	2♣	8+ flat with a major
2♠	2NT	4 hearts, dead minimum, passable
	3♣/♦	notrump probes
	3♥	3-4 majors, chunky hearts
	3♠	forcing, since 2♠ is F2NPR
	3NT	typically 2-4 majors, no weak suit
	4♣/♦/♥	4-card support, chunky side suit
	4♠	4 trumps, fast arrival

4 3-level breaks are different. We play them as splinters. See next chapter.

A singleton opposite a balanced hand should be a red light to relay. Are you facing Q54 or AQT?

♠ K 6 4	♠ Q J 7 5
♥ A Q 9 4 3	♥ K 7
♦ A K 6 5	♦ Q J 4 3
♣ 6	♣ Q 5 4
WEST	EAST
1♣	2♣ 8+ flat with a major
2♥	2♠ 2NT would be passable
3♦	3♥
3♠	4♦ etc

It would be silly to reach 3NT just because there is no 8-card major fit. West's 3♦ suggested a black suit shortage, then they both politely offered to be dummy.

Bidding your denied major

You could play opener's rebid in a denied major as natural – an offer to play. That is fine when responding to partner's takeout double but less useful in other auctions. We are talking about:

WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
1♦	1♥ or 1NT	1♥	1NT
2♥		2♠	

We use these to show shapely maximums with **6+ in the shown major or a 5-5**. Hands like this:

♠ K Q J 7 6 5	♥ A 6 5	♦ A 5	♣ 10 5 , or
♠ 6	♥ K Q 10 7 6	♦ A J 9 7 6	♣ A 6

The first hand is worth 3♠ but why go down when partner has the wrong minimum? A 2♥ rebid allows you to stop in 2♠. Responder bids 2♠ with most minimums and 2NT with game interest, to find whether you have 6+ or 5-5.

The second hand is a possible 1♣ opening but the stiff spade suggests 1♥.

Having opened 1♥, a 2♦ rebid is inadequate and risks missing hearts, while 3♦ would suggest 4-6. Try 2♠. This time you can't avoid the 3-level but at least you can get your shape across.

When responder bids 2♣ or 2♦, opener can use the denied major to show extra length plus a fit for responder's minor:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
	1♥	♠ A 4
2♣	?	♥ K Q 9 8 3 2
		♦ 7 6
		♣ A J 3

2♥ is okay but game is a chance. 2♠ suggests this – a good hand with club support, plus long hearts. You will probably follow through with 3♥ over 3♣.

Seven trumps are plenty

We are happy to play 2♥ or 2♠ with seven trumps. In part, this is making a virtue of necessity, since responder is obliged to raise on three to avoid missing the 5-3 major fit.

Natural systems happily drop opener in a 5-2 major fit. Likewise the 4-3 fit is no disaster at the 2-level. It's sometimes better than the 5-2, when ruffs can be taken in dummy. Take this:

♠ 6 5 3	♠ A 10 7 2
♥ K 10 6 5	♥ J 9 4
♦ A Q 5	♦ K 8 3 2
♣ A 4 3	♣ 10 7

WEST	EAST
1♥	2♥

Opener hasn't struck gold but 2♥ should travel okay. Just ruff a club then plough away in trumps. My guess is one off but you could well make. 1NT is favourite to fail and could be held to five tricks on a moderately bad day.

Admittedly, 2♥ could be unpleasant if they get a few diamond ruffs or trumps are 5-1 but remember that West will often have a more suitable hand.

These minor spats obscure the real issue, TNT. Playing Scamp, it's sometimes harder to nail down the TNT but this can be a blessing. We use the threat of the 7-card fit to leave the opponents guessing.

Finding the 5-3 fit

This can be awkward playing 4-card majors, though responder can usually relay or double with a 3-card limit raise.⁵

Some Standard players have Bergen to provide partner – and the opponents – with the information they need. We don't mind keeping them in the dark but there are times where we too can play the TNT game:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	
1♥	2NT	Dbl	3-card limit
WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♦ ^{spades}	2NT	?	♠ A J 5
			♥ K J 8 5 4
			♦ 9 2
			♣ Q 5 4

Double shows this. Better than wondering what to do when 3♦ comes back to you. For the cues, we play 3♣ = ♥s (3♥ direct is competitive) 3♦ = ♠s, 4-card limit in this case.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	
1♥	2♥ ^{Mich}	Dbl	3-card limit+
		2♠	4-card limit+

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
		1♥	♠ 7 5
2♥	Dbl	?	♥ K Q 8 5 4
			♦ A 2
			♣ K J 5 4

Looks like North has done well. Redouble to show a decent offensive hand with five trumps, so partner can work out what to do.

5 You might consider **transfer responses**:

1♥ - (1♠) - 2♠ = diamonds; 2♦ = 3-card limit+. We don't.
Some pairs use transfers in **uncontested** auctions.

The Range Probe: 1♦ - 1♥

Having two “relays” over the 1♦ opening allows accurate invitational sequences and can help find the right partscore.

Responder has few problems with a balanced hand:

1♦	?	6-10 ⁻	bid 1NT
		10-12	1♥, invite opposite 13-15 bal
		13-14 ⁻	1♠, then invite with 2NT
		14+	relay to game

Another use for the range probe is to cater for weakish hands that are unsuited to other actions. Take this:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♦	?	♠ 7 5 3
		♥ Q 10 5 4
		♦ 6 2
		♣ K 7 5 4

You **could** bid 2♠; it's a matter of style. We like a raise to show a decent hand so this is way short, as well as dangerous. 1NT is also risky and it's wrong to pass, leaving your fate to the whim of the fourth player.

We would roll out the range probe, planning to pass most of partner's rebids, or convert 2♦ to 2♠ as a **sign-off**.

The other candidate for the range probe is a 6-10 count that doesn't want to bid a suit or 1NT, so 2-suited:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♦	?	♠ 10 3
		♥ 7 6
		♦ K 10 6 4 2
		♣ A J 8 4

The suit's not up to scratch for 2♦, which opener will sometimes pass with a singleton, while 1NT is dubious with two small in partner's denied major. Pass is okay but 1♥ offers a chance to find the right partscore.

Over opener's 1♠ minimum, a delayed 2♦ will work nicely because it suggests another possible contract – *two places to play*. This might get you to the 5-2 spade fit, conceivably 3♣. (If opener has something like 4-3-1-5)

Opener's rebid

Although our usual style is to canapé into new suits, we can be more flexible opposite the range probe because responder will be prepared for other strains:

1♥ ^{RP}	1♦	spades
	1♠	most minimums
	1NT	13 ⁺ - 15 semi-balanced (2♣ = Checkback)
	2♣/♦	max, 5-4 either way ⁶
	2♥	max, 6♠s or a 5-5
	2♠	6♠s, not a max
	2NT	no idea ⁷
	3♣/♦	good canapé, 6-carder

Over opener's 1♠ minimum, 2♣ & 2♦ are convertible sign-offs, 2-suited. 2♥+ invite, delayed jumps show partial fit.

Over opener's maximums, responder needs a **forcing enquiry**. This is either 2NT, or 2♣ *Checkback* over 1NT. Other bids are weakish at the 2-level, invitational above.

♠ A10 9 7 5	♠ K J
♥ 3	♥ A 5 2
♦ K J 9	♦ Q10 5 4 3
♣ A J 10 3	♣ Q 9 6

WEST	EAST
1♦	1♥ ^{RP}
2♣	2NT forcing
3♦	4♦
4♠	No ?!

It was mean of the opponents not to bid hearts. A crude jump to 3NT over 2♣ would be justly punished. The forcing enquiry is ideal.

West showed a fragment, then offered a choice of games. Looks like East might have chosen the wrong one.

6 Canapé is a bit more likely because opener would often have rebid 1NT with 5-2-4+2.

7 Maybe solid spades, semi-balanced max.

The operation was a success

♠ Q 5	♠ A 10 9 7 2
♥ A J 9 3	♥ K Q 10
♦ 9 8 2	♦ 7 3
♣ A 10 9 3	♣ K Q 8

1♥ ^{RP}	1♦ spades
2NT	1NT 13-15 (semi) balanced
3♥	3♣ !
	4♥

West would have bid 2♣ *Checkback* with three spades or five hearts, so East knew there was no major fit. Nevertheless, chunky majors persuaded East to offer alternatives.

3♣ suggested a weak red suit. West showed stuff in hearts, raised as a choice of games. Good news – diamonds were 5-3. However, hearts were 5-1 and the patient died.

Scrambling after a 1♥ opening

The lack of room makes it harder to find the best partscore over 1♥. Here are two tips:

- Need a good reason not to raise on three. If you respond 1NT then give “preference” to 2♥, you suggest length in **spades**.
- It’s okay to respond 2♣ with a decent 5-card suit. You might come unstuck if opener passes with 3-5-4-1 but otherwise you’ll reach a playable spot.

Respond 1NT with other 5422s. You can still land on your feet:

♠ A J 4	♠ K 10 7 3 2
♥ K 9 7 5 2	♥ 4 3
♦ 8	♦ A Q 6 5
♣ A J 9 2	♣ 8 3

WEST	EAST
1♥	1NT
2♣	2♥
2♠ !?	No

2♥ shows spades, 2-3 hearts, doubleton club. It allows opener to correct to 2♠ with 3-4 majors. Opener was a bit greedy.

How often does responder have three hearts for 1NT?

♠ K1054 ♥ 864 ♦ Q1095 ♣ K8

2♥ directly has merit but three small, four spades and a good doubleton point the other way, certainly at matchpoints. Then 2♥ over 2♣ shows something like this – seven major cards.

No guarantees. You will look silly if opener has 1-4-3-5. Transfer openings would avoid this rare problem. See *Chapter 16*.

Evaluation

This is kindergarten stuff but strong clubbers need special guidance. Some decisions can be close, such as whether to give a positive to 1♣.

It's acceptable to have one fewer than the minimum SPs but never two. Give the negative with a spray of quacks:

♠ J5 ♥ Q104 ♦ QJ54 ♣ QJ63

This rare hand should respond 1♦ to 1♣. You're still not out of the woods. If partner rebids 1♠, 2NT would be a raise so bid 3NT.

Be wary with a flawed 8-count or one with 4 SPs:

♠ K54 ♥ 965 ♦ Q5 ♣ K9743

1♦ again, planning to raise 1♠ to 2♠ or invite via 2NT over most other rebids. 5 SPs but spread too thin, bad diamonds and no intermediates. If we change the ♦Q into the ♣Q, the chunky suit swings it the other way.

With openings, choose the one that avoids a rebid problem:

♠ K10864 ♥ 8 ♦ AK6 ♣ KQ32

Close between 1♦ and 1♣ but 1♦ could prove awkward if partner responds 1♥ or 1NT. 2♣ doesn't seem to cut it. Better to call this a 16-count.

If we swap the majors, prefer 1♥ to 1♣, partly to avoid the rebid problem over the negative. Also, it's undesirable to open 1♣ on a minimum with a spade shortage.

Losers and Cover Cards

We use reinforcements like the loser count as backups in hand evaluation. A 1♣ opening will usually have six losers or fewer, often five if unbalanced.

Opposite a major opening, four trumps and eight losers doesn't mean you have to play the 3-level:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♥	1♠	♠ A 10 8 3
2♣	?	♥ K 6 5 4
		♦ 5 4
		♣ K 6 4

Eight losers but not quite enough for 2NT first time, which would have been more appealing with better trumps.

Take the low road here with 2♥⁸. That could be 3-card support. You hope partner shrugs and passes, then takes exactly eight tricks.

Cover cards complement losers. After a 1♣ opener shows a long suit, responder should be looking at tricks, not points.

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♣	1♦	♠ A 10 4 3
2♥	?	♥ Q 8 5
		♦ 5 4 3
		♣ 6 4 3

Dull shape but worth a raise because your two honours cover two of partner's losers. If we move a club to hearts, you provide three tricks, enough to reduce partner's six losers to three.

The same hand should pass a 2♦ rebid. Game is a long way off with no fitting honour.

8 3♥ over 2♣ is not an option for us anyway. We use that as a heart splinter. See next chapter.

Shunning the 4-4

E/NS	♠ Q973	
	♥ AJ983	
	♦ J2	
	♣ 106	
♠ AJ108		♠ K642
♥ Q1053		♥ K42
♦ AQ7		♦ K10
♣ K5		♣ Q984
	♠ 5	
	♥ 7	
	♦ 986543	
	♣ AJ732	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♦	No
1♠ ¹³⁺	No	2♣	
2♦ ^R		3♣	4-3-2-4
3NT!			

Good trumps but the outside strength and partner's shape suggests notrumps. 4♠ usually failed.

Tiptoe through the 2-level

With a misfit, opener is expected to bid features up the line:

♠ AK54	♠ 73
♥ K92	♥ Q1043
♦ 8	♦ AQ654
♣ J9642	♣ 83

WEST	EAST
1♦	1♥ ^{RP}
1♠ ^{minimum}	2♦
2♥	No

East decides to forgo 1NT in favour of a scramble for the 7-card fit. 2♦ suggests a 2-suiter with five diamonds so the team reaches a playable spot. East could equally have that earlier 2-2-5-4, removing 2♥ to 2♠ to show it.

Chapter 13

Bright ideas

Here are more useful plug-ins, some from David Morgan. These gadgets come up rarely so follow the surgeon's motto in the early days – "When in doubt, cut it out."

Extra slam bidding machinery comes in the next chapter.

ASPRO 2♣

After 1♣ : 1♦, opener needs a way to deal with hearts, since 1♥ shows 19+ any. 1NT is okay for balanced hands with five hearts, while 2♥ should show six. That leaves the 2-suiters. Try this:

1♦	1♣	
	1♥	19+ any
	2♣	hearts & another
	2♦/♥	1-suiters, usually 6-carders
	2♠	spades & a minor, 5-5
	2NT	minors, very rarely 4-5
	3♣	1-suiter
	3♦	5-5 reds
	3♥	5-6 majors

This treats hearts well at the expense of the club 1-suiters.

2♣ is hearts & another, 5-4 either way. However, hands with five spades & four hearts bid 1♠ then 2♥, removing that ambiguity.

ASPRO principles apply – responder bids 2♥ on most hands with three hearts. 2♦ is a passable relay. Other suit bids are natural, 2NT asks for the second suit. Details of Aspro are in *Chapter 15 – They Open*. Here are opener's rebids over the "relay":

1♦ 2♦ ^R	1♣	
	2♣	hearts & another
	No	5 diamonds, minimum
	2♥	5♥s, unknown 4-carder
	2♠	4-5 majors, good hand (else rebid 2♥)
	2NT	clubs canapé , minimum
	3♣/♦	canapé maximums

Opener might prefer to rebid 1NT with 2-4-2-5, rather than finish in 3♣, but 2♣ is better with a side singleton or five hearts:

♠ AK 4	♠ J 8 3 2
♥ K J 8 7 3	♥ 9 6
♦ 6	♦ A 10 9 4 3
♣ A J 3 2	♣ 7 5
WEST	EAST
1♣	1♦
2♣	2♦ show your 5-card suit
2♥	No

This auction is messy but the alternative of bidding 2♥ over 1♦ is unattractive, courting the 5-1 fit. When responder has a stiff heart, a scramble via 2♣ : 2♦ : 2♥ : 2♠ rates to find a better spot.

Opener's club hands don't fare well:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	EAST
♠ K 7 5	1♣	1♦
♥ 10	?	
♦ K Q J 5		
♣ A Q J 8 3		

Hate it. Aspro has given us the unappealing choice between 1NT and 2NT. (1♠ is silly) We choose 1NT with misgivings. 2NT is not so bad, provided partner always bids 3♣ with 3-3 or 2-2.

Don't like it? A simple alternative is to give up relay after the negative. You would then use 1♥/♠ as one round forces, Meckwell-style. Those guys currently use a 2♥ rebid over the 1♦ negative to show some game force, Kokish-style.

Fancy responses to 1NT

The basic system uses the usual major transfers; 2♠ as a raise; 2NT for minors. We also play 3♥/♠ as shortage, 4♣/♦ as *South African Texas*. That's all fine, but for those prepared to venture further from the beaten path ...

The Flint Principle – pass or correct

After a 1NT opening, responder can invite game with 2♠, the range probe. This is usually 10⁺-12⁻ balanced, but could be a weaker hand with a long minor. If that's the case, game needs opener to have a good fit for the minor.

With any minimum, opener bids 2NT. With 14-15, opener bids three of the **worse** minor, a technique devised by Jeremy Flint. For example:

♠ A K 4	♠ 10 8 3
♥ K 10 5	♥ 7 2
♦ A 6 4 3	♦ K J 8 7 5 2
♣ 9 5 4	♣ A 6
WEST	EAST
1NT	2♠ range probe
3♣ no club fit	3♦ invitational
3NT	No

West shows a maximum with no club fit, so they reach the cool 22-point game. If East has long clubs instead, the bidding would end with West's 3♣.

If West bids 2NT to show a minimum, East retreats to the long minor and West can still have a go.

We use the same scheme after 1♣ : 1♦ : 1NT.

There is also a way to handle all the 3-suiters – the 4441s and some 5431s. With both minors, bid 2NT then 3♥ or 3♠ as a fragment.

With both majors and a minor shortage, start with the 2♠ range probe, then bid 3M over 2NT to show length in the corresponding minor. (3♥ = clubs, 3♠ = diamonds) This is disagreeably complex. It accommodates our wish to avoid relay with a singleton and came from this bad experience:

♠ K Q 4	♠ A 7 3 2
♥ K J 8	♥ A Q 7 4
♦ A 6 5	♦ 9
♣ 10 9 3 2	♣ K J 6 5
WEST	EAST
1NT	2♠ range probe
2NT	3♥ clubs, so 4-4-1-4 or similar
4♦	4♥

At the table, East simply raised 1NT to game for one off when spades were not 3-3 and there was no obscure squeeze. Galling that the three suit games were all makeable.

Gladiator

This is an old way to respond to 1NT, associated with Acol. These days the world plays transfers but Gladiator goes well with our notrump. It solves this problem:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1NT	2♦ ^{tfr}	♠ A 6 5
2♥	?	♥ K J 7 6 5
		♦ 6
		♣ Q 10 6 4

Opposite 12-15, East has interest in 4♥ if there's a fit but has no real liking for 3NT. Continuing with 2NT, 3♣ or 3♥ risks the plus.

Gladiator uses direct 2♥ & 2♠ responses to show invitational hands with a 5+ suit. The hand above is perfect. It works like this:

1NT	2♣	Relay as usual
	2♦	please bid 2♥, usually weak in a major
	2♥/♠	invitational with a 5 or 6 card suit
	2NT+	as before

What have you lost? Major transfers allow opener to declare more often but that is less of an issue opposite a weak notrump. In fact, it is often better to keep the unbalanced, unknown hand hidden. Playing Standard, major transfers are needed for some strong hands but relay takes care of those.

You lose the 2♠ range probe but that could be thrown in with the "Multi" 2♦.

All good arguments but **we don't currently play Gladiator**, sticking with dull major transfers. With the hand above, we would transfer then bid 3♣ **non-forcing**, showing an invitational 5-4, always with a side singleton.

1NT in competitive auctions

If our first descriptive bid in a competitive auction is 1NT by the ostensibly stronger hand, the usual responding methods apply. For instance:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	1♦	Dbl	1♠
1NT	No	?	

As if they had passed throughout – 2♣ is Stayman, major transfers. This is not ideal in some auctions but avoids memory strain and

allows us to play in their suit. However, if second hand acts over opener's 1NT rebid, it's all natural. (But see next heading)

If West rebids 2NT, we play Puppet Stayman, 4-suit transfers and normal Texas.

Rubensohl transfers

Rubensohl is a method associated with Sydney's Bruce Neill, based on an idea from Jeff Rubens. (&/or Ira Rubin) When they preempt over our strong club, responder would like to be able show a long suit in a hand of any strength. This is the problem:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♣	2♥	?	♠ 5 4
			♥ 10 9
			♦ A Q 9 8 4 3
			♣ 6 5 3

Awkward because 3♦ would be a forcing overbid, while starting with double is playing roulette. So you might pass and lose on hands where 2♥ and 3♦ both make, or opener would have been delighted to hear about your long suit and values. With Rubensohl, responder bids 3♣ **transfer**, to have a cake and eat it. Here is **our adaption** of the scheme:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	
1♣ ¹⁶⁺	2♥	dbl	takeout, not 1-suited
		2♠	not forcing
		2NT	5-7, stopper ¹
		3♣/♥/♠	suit transfers
		3♦	stopper ask

Transfers also gain by putting the overcaller on lead. Opener accepts the transfer with most minimums; a new suit or jump by opener is forcing.

1 More common is to use 2NT as a transfer to clubs. However, you lose the natural invite playing that way, plus the wrong hand will play 3NT.
Some use 3♠ as a transfer to 3NT, for right-siding and slam tries.

Rubensohl also applies after a 1♥ or 1♠ overcall; or after our 1NT opening and a 2M overcall. (See next section)

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♣	1♠	?	♠ 5 4
			♥ K 10 9 3
			♦ Q J 10 8 4
			♣ 6 4

Double, then 2♦ over 1NT/2♣ by opener – if you get the chance – to show a weakish red 2-suiter. If we add an ace, start with a transfer to diamonds. Immediate jump shifts to 3♣+ show strong 1-suiters.

Transfer with a weaker 1-suiter, planning to either pass a raise yourself. Thus double is rarely a 1-suiter.

This doubling style doesn't work so well with long clubs:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♣	1♥	?	♠ Q 10 6 3
			♥ 5 4
			♦ 8
			♣ K J 8 7 6 4

Double makes sense, rather than giving up on spades by transferring to clubs. Over 2♦ by opener, 3♣ suggests this shape but it's **forcing**. Perhaps 1♠ then 3♣ shows this hand?

The 2NT complex – Puppet & Scrambling

This is a meaty area. The back room boys have been playing around with 2NT for decades and they've come up with some neat ideas.

First we have Lebensohl, an idea miscredited to a guy called Ken Lebensold. To add to the confusion, Lebensohl is really two conventions, masquerading under the same name.

After a 1NT opening

Lebensohl arose to deal with this:

WEST	NORTH	EAST
1NT	2♠	?

The thinking was that East could do without an invite here. Hands that would have invited via 2NT should either pass, double or wing it in 3NT. So 2NT was freed to show something else, such as a weakish hand with a long suit.

All reasonable but Scamp's wide-range notrump changes the odds. We don't use Lebensohl. Rather, we keep 2NT as a natural invite, while 3♣+ are Rubensohl transfers. No need for Stayman:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	
1NT	2♥	Dbl	penalty
		2♠	negative free bid
		2NT	invite
		3♣/♥/♠	suit transfers
		3♦	stopper ask
		3NT	should have a stopper

Partner doubles 2-of-a-major for takeout

A relative of Lebensohl, sometimes called *Lebextensions*, allows responder to differentiate between weak and invitational hands. This is how:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
2♥	Dbl	No	2♠	weakish
			2NT	please bid 3♣, usually weak
			3♣/♦	invitational, say 8-11 pts
			3♥	Stayman, no stopper
			3♠	5♠s, invite
			3NT	to play, stopper

Over 2NT, the doubler *puppets* to 3♣ if content, or bids something else with a nice hand. After 3♣ by opener, responder passes with clubs or signs off in 3♦. 2NT then 3NT suggests four spades plus a stopper. 2NT then 3♠ is invitational with four spades.

You give up the option of playing exactly 2NT. With 8-11 and a stopper, either bid a suit to show values, gamble a penalty pass, or overbid to 3NT.

Further extensions

We also use *Lebextensions* in auctions when we open and these conditions apply:

- the last bid was 2♥ or 2♠ by an opponent, doubled for takeout by partner
- both our hands are more or less unlimited
- game is still a chance

There are heaps of examples after a 1♣ opening:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	2♠	Dbl	No
<u>2NT</u>			

Sounds natural, but opener is showing some minimum, intending to *pass or correct* 3♣ by responder. With 19+, opener bids directly at the 3-level, forcing to game.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	2♥	No	No
Dbl	No	<u>2NT</u>	

Weak with a minor. East might have had to pass 2♥ on a useful hand with a minor, so bidding it now would show values.

This may not be so great if opener has some big balanced hand with a positional heart stopper. Opener should consider 2NT instead to avoid this, then Puppet Stayman would follow. Another damn puppet ...

However, it does not apply after a limited opening:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	2♠	Dbl	No
<u>2NT</u>			

Not Lebensohl. There is a case for this to be natural but we play it as **scrambling**, looking to land on our feet.

Scrambling 2NT

This is a good idea many have picked up from books like *Better Bidding with Bergen*. When partner doubles 2M for takeout and it's **clear** that game is out of the question, we use 2NT to find a playable spot. Applies in protective auctions:

♠ 5	♠ Q 7 2
♥ A Q 3	♥ J 10 6 5
♦ K Q 9 4 2	♦ 5 3
♣ K 9 7 3	♣ Q 10 6 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♦	2♠	No	No
Dbl	No	<u>2NT</u>	No
3♣	end		

When West bravely doubles 2♠, it's clearly a case of finding the

best partscore. 2NT shows "two places to play", to use the American vernacular. East needs to find out whether partner has six diamonds or 5-4. This is similar:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	2♠	No	No
Dbl	No	<u>2NT</u>	

This also is scrambling, looking for our best spot at the 3-level. Not Lebensohl, because opener is limited.

Splinters opposite balanced hands

Try this scheme, a simplified version of one of David Morgan's ideas:

	1♣	
2♣ ^{bal}	2♦	GF relay
	2♥/♠	F2NPR, 4 or 5 card suit
	2NT	invite without a major, 16-17 ²
	3-any	splinters , no 5-card major

3-suiters without a long major can show shortage directly.² Responder will know that 3NT requires a good stopper, and four small could be golden:

♠ A Q 9 4	♠ K 7 6
♥ 7	♥ J 9 5 4
♦ K Q 6	♦ A 7
♣ A K 9 8 6	♣ Q J 7 2

WEST	EAST
1♣	2♣ 8+ bal with a major
3♥ ^{shortage}	4♣
4♥	4♠
4NT	5♣
6♣	No

4♣ was natural then 4♥ agreed clubs and invited a spade cue with extras. (4♦ would be natural) 4NT was RKC, 1430 for us.

The same scheme applies after 1♣ : 2♦.

These particular splinters don't apply in contested auctions.

² David actually prefers **transfer** splinters (1♣ : 2♣ : 3♦ = heart shortage)

Lately, we've extended this. 3-anything by the relayer is a splinter over a bid that proclaims "balanced". So:

1♥	1♠
2♣ balanced	3♣/♦/♥/♠ are all splinters

It can be useful to **splinter in partner's suit**, again to avoid a silly 3NT or reach a tight slam:

♠ J 6 5 4	♠ 3
♥ A Q 3	♥ K 4 2
♦ K J 7 6	♦ A Q 9 8 2
♣ 8 7	♣ K Q 4 2

WEST	EAST
1♦ ^{spades}	1♠ ^R
2♣ balanced	3♠ ^{shortage}
4♦	5♦ or 4♠ with a spade void

1♣ - 1♦ positive

The semi-positive hands opposite a 1♣ opening are crucial. It would be good to show shape quickly with these, rather than lump them in with the weak hands. There is less urgency with the game force hands because level is already established. So how might it work?

Paul Marston uses the 1♦ response as **any game force**, so everything else shows less. Best is to have 1♣ : 1♠ as 0-4, with other responses showing 5-8.

There are a few problems with this. Firstly, the 1♠ double negative takes away a crucial bid from the 5-8s. Secondly, can't use responses of 2♥+ as artificial shape-showing, since you may not belong in game.

Over the 1♦ positive, opener drops into normal shape-showing. This is adequate but it's not so good to have the 8+ hand doing the asking. Admittedly, it's less of an issue if 1♣ is 15+ and positives start at nine, as they do in *Moscito*.

Over the 1♠ double negative, 1NT by opener is natural-ish, 2♣ is like a strong 2♣ opening, the rest are natural.

Feel like some mental exercise? Your task is to fill the gaps with the semi-positives, keeping the higher responses natural. If you get stuck, try to track down Marston. www.grandslam.com.au is a good place to start.

Responding to Weak Twos

We use simple weak twos in the majors, could be 5-carders not vul in first and third seats.

Here is a possible relay-style responding structure:

2♥/♠	2♠, 3x	not forcing (3♠ forcing over 2♥)
	3♥/♠	to play if a raise
	4♣/♦	fit-showing
	2NT	Game interest relay
3♣		min, then 3♦ is GFR as below, up 1
3♦		max, semi-bal <u>or</u> HS; then <u>step</u> asks
3♥		max, MS
3♠		max, LS
3NT		AKQxxx
4♣/♦		6-5s

After the rough shape is found, responder can ask for SPs, starting at three. New suit at the 3-level is forcing in competition; double is penalty.

Muiderberg

Or try Muiderberg Twos – 2♥ & 2♠ show good 5-card suits plus a 4+ minor, 6-10 pts. Vulnerable, you'd prefer 5-5. Responses follow our usual style but there is no relay:

2♥	2♠	natural, not forcing
	2NT	asks for the minor, could be weak
	3♣/♦	natural (not pass/correct) not forcing
	3♥	to play

Responder also bids 2NT with a game try in hearts, or to set up a force in some other suit. With a 5-5 maximum, opener can bid 3♥ = clubs, 3♠ = diamonds over 2NT.

If you want to add some complexity, try this instead:

2♥	2NT	game-force; responses as above
	3♣	pass or correct
	3♦	invitational in hearts

2NT followed by 3♥ becomes forcing, as is a delayed minor raise. This method is better for slams at the expense of losing the natural responses of 3♣ and 3♦.

We still prefer 3♣/♦ as natural, though the pass/correct school is

dominant at the moment. We don't see why opener's crappy 4-card minor should cramp our style:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
2♠ ^{♠+m}	?	♠ 6
		♥ A10 7 5
		♦ 9 3
		♣ K Q10 6 4 3

3♣ looks normal, rather than floundering. Also, you don't want partner to lead a spade or diamond against 3NT. Double is penalty.

3-card limit raise

S/Both	♠ J 9	
	♥ K J 7 5 4	
	♦ K 8 5	
	♣ K 8 4	
♠ Q 4		♠ A 10 8 7 6 2
♥ Q 10 3		♥ A 6
♦ 10 9 4		♦ Q J 3 2
♣ Q J 10 9 3		♣ 7
	♠ K 5 3	
	♥ 9 8 2	
	♦ A 7 6	
	♣ A 8 5 2	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
No	1♥	2♠	No
No	2NT	No	Db1
End			3♥

Most opened the South cards, not an option for us.

South was mulling over 1NT or 2♥, both of which show 8-11, when East's 2♠ appeared. We always have two ways to raise 3-over-2, so South could have bid 2NT as a raise, since 1♥ is usually a 5-carder. Double was more flexible.

2NT in response to a takeout double of 2-of-a-major is "never" to play, so North used that to start scrambling, suggesting five hearts.

3♥ was no fun on the ♣7 lead but nine tricks were made when the ♥9 brought forth the ace.

Splinter opposite balanced

S/EW	♠ 5 4 3	
	♥ K 5 3	
	♦ Q 8 5 3	
	♣ Q 3 2	
♠ A K J 9		♠ Q 10 8 7 6
♥ J 9 8 6		♥ Q 10
♦ 10 6 2		♦ 7
♣ J 7		♣ 10 8 6 5 4
	♠ 2	
	♥ A 7 4 2	
	♦ A K J 9 4	
	♣ A K 9	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♣
No	1♦	No	1♥ ¹⁹⁺
No	2♠ ^{bal, no M}	No	3♠ ^{shortage}
No	4♥	No	5♦

Nice auction, though South was lucky. It might have been better to bid 2♣ Aspro over 1♦.

When responder denies a major, we have been known to "splinter" in a major with a small doubleton. So call this particular one a stopper-ask. North would bid 3NT with the majors swapped. 4♣/♦ would suggest five, maybe 4♣ with 3-2-4-4.

Splimit by the strong clubber

♠ 9	♠ A 3 2	
♥ A J 9 8	♥ Q 10 7 4 2	
♦ A 10 9 7	♦ K J 3	
♣ A K 5 4	♣ 9 7	
1♣	1♠	hearts
2NT ^{splimit}	3♣ [?]	
3♠	4♦	
4NT ^{RKC}	5♣	1 key card
5♦ ^{♥Q?}	6♥	

A good hand for 1430! Easy enough in Standard. Again, it's important for West **not** to relay on this minimum with good trumps and a shortage. You might have *Serious 3NT* available. We don't.

Should have reached for an Aspro

♠ 6	♠ K 8 7 4 3 2
♥ A K Q 6	♥ 10 9 5 3
♦ K Q 10 8 3	♦ —
♣ K Q 2	♣ 9 7 4
WEST	EAST
1♣	1♦
1♥ ¹⁹⁺	1♠ ⁰⁻⁴
2♦	2♣
No	

Most of the field reached 4♥ and made it.

East might have shown a semi-positive over 1♥ but it's a poor suit. West has a great 19-count with a big rebid problem.

2♣ Aspro would have been a better choice. Think of 1♥ as big balanced, or an Acoll Two or better. Not this 3-suiter.

Put the overcaller on lead

	♠ A Q J 8 5	
	♥ 9 8	
	♦ A 7 2	
	♣ Q 8 2	
♠ K 7		♠ 10 3 2
♥ A 10 5		♥ K Q J 7 6 2
♦ K Q J 4 3		♦ 10 6
♣ A J 6		♣ 9 5
	♠ 9 6 4	
	♥ 4 3	
	♦ 9 8 5	
	♣ K 10 7 4 3	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	1♠	2♦ ^{tr}	No
3♥	No	4♥	End

3♥ was forcing, so East ploughed on. North led the ♣2 but declarer's ♣J was enough to sideline South.

This sort of transfer gain is not common but very pleasing.

Chapter 14

More slams

Our default slam method is to relay the shape out, ask for strength in Slam Points, press the DCB button a few times. Crude but effective. It works most of the time, at least when the opponents are silent. Here are some supplements.

Zooming to a Threshold

In relay auctions, the describer often *zooms* ahead to answer the next implied question. We extend this practice to Slam Points. Take this auction, where responder has shown a flat game force with a major:

1♣	2♣	flat with a major
2♦ ^R	3♥	3-4-3-3

We use the bids from 3♥ up to show 3-4-3-3 and the strength in Slam Points:

....	3♥	3-4-3-3, 5-6 Slam Points
	3♠	“ ” 7 SPs
	3NT	“ ” 8 SPs
	4♣	“ ” 9 SPs, etc

This saves space if opener is slam-minded. We say 3NT is a *threshold*, meaning that describer cannot go past 3NT unless strong enough to resurrect, which requires 9 SPs.

If describer bids 3♥ to show 5-6 SPs, relayer bids 3♠ for clarification. Then 3NT shows 5 SPs, 4♣ and higher show 6 SPs, zooming on to denial cue bidding.

Nearly all instances of zooming to a threshold occur when describer is balanced or semi-balanced. For instance:

1♣	2♠	6+ clubs, HS
2NT	3♣	semi-balanced
3♦	3♥	2-2-3-6 (high - middle)
	3♠	2-3-2-6, 5-6 SPs
	3NT	“ ” 7-8 SPs
	4♣	“ ” 9 SPs, etc

The degree of compression depends on the end point.

There is no compression if the bid to show the shape is 3♦ or lower.

We compress at the bottom. For those who like tables:

	If the bid that shows the last shape is:			
	3♦	3♥	3♠	3NT
3♦ =>	5 SPs			
3♥ =>	6 SPs	5-6 SPs		
3♠ =>	7 SPs	7 SPs	5-6 SPs	
3N =>	8* SPs	8* SPs	7-8* SPs	5-8* SPs
4♣ =>	9 SPs	9 SPs	9 SPs	9 SPs

* & some dull hands with 9 SPs. Pretend you have 8.

Adapt these numbers for the limited openings. A limited hand cannot resurrect, so can't zoom past 3NT. This is how 11-15 point hands compress:

	If the bid that shows the last shape is:			
	3♦	3♥	3♠	3NT
3♦ =>	6 SPs			
3♥ =>	7 SPs	6-7 SPs		
3♠ =>	8 SPs	8 SPs	6-7 SPs	
3N =>	9 (10)	9 (10)	8-9 (10)	6-9 (10)

11-15 point hands with 10 SPs are quite rare, so we don't set aside 3NT just for them. Think of the range for limit openings as 6-9 SPs. (7-10 for the 1NT opening)

In zooming auctions, we put the super-maxes in with the 9 SP hands, though split (in two or three) if partner asks.

Skiping final resolution

When there is a group of **two** balanced or semi-balanced hands left, asker can bid Step+1 to say "Forget final resolution, go to SPs"

...	3♣	2-4-4-3 / 3-4-4-2, for instance
3♦ ^R		
3♥ ^{SPs}	3♠	5 SPs, etc (saves at least one step)

In DCB, describer treats the shape as 3-4-4-3.

Jacks

Showing jacks can be useful for grands or detecting holes in the trump suit. On the second pass, describer can show a second honour – KQ, KJ, QJ. (not AJ !)

♠ Q 8 4	♠ K 7 6 3 2
♥ K Q 10 7 3	♥ A 8 4
♦ A K	♦ 10 6
♣ K 7 2	♣ A Q 3

1♠ ^R	1♦	spades
2♦	2♣	balanced
2♠	2♥	5♠s
3♦ ^{SPs}	3♣	5-3-2-3
4♦	4♣	9 SPs
5♣	4NT	♠, ♥ - yes, ♣ - 2 or 0
5♥	5♦	♦ - 0 (or 2)
No can't play 5NT	5♠	♠ - no 2nd

Most of the field happily steamed into this 15% slam.

If we give East the ♠J, 6NT is nearly 90%. East would bid 5NT over 5♥ with that. West was lucky to have three resting places at the 5-level – admittedly landing in the worst one.

♠ A Q	♠ K J 4 3 2
♥ A 5 4	♥ K 7 3
♦ A K Q J	♦ 9 4
♣ A 10 7 2	♣ K 8 3

1♣	1♥	spades, 8+
1♠	2NT	middle shortage
3♣	3♦	5-3-2-3
3♥ ^{SPs}	3NT	6 SPs
4♣	4NT	♠, ♥, ♣ - yes, ♦ - no
5♣	5♥	♠ - 2nd, ♥ - no 2nd
7NT		

It took a while to locate the ♠J. East could also have ♥Q & ♣KQx. That's 13 tricks as well.

Kontrols

Kontrols are aces and kings. A = 2, K = 1. When shape is out, relayer can ask for Kontrols by bidding Step+1. 4♣ is the highest Kontrol-ask. (4♦ is something else)

This is the table:

HCP	Slam Points	Kontrols
11-15	6 - 9 (10)	3+
12-15 (1NT)	7 - 10	3+
8+	5+	2+
5-7	3 - 5	1+

After a Kontrol reply, normal DCB applies. Stopping shows no ace or king in the suit, **or both**. The second pass locates queens. Singleton kings (kingletons) are treated at full value.

Slam Points or Kontrols?

The early rounds of relay should flow smoothly, with little pause for thought. After the shape is out, the relayer takes time out to decide whether and how to try for slam.

♠ J 6 5	♠ A 9 8 2
♥ A Q 10 8 4 2	♥ K 3
♦ K J 9	♦ A Q 8 7 5
♣ A	♣ K 10
WEST	EAST
1♣	1♥ spades, not flat, 8+ pts
1♠	2♣ & diamonds
2♦	2♥ canapé
2♠	3♣ 4-2-5-2
3♥ ^{Ks?}	4♥ 6 Kontrols
4♠	5NT ♦, ♠, ♥, ♣ – yes; ♦Q, no ♠Q
7♦	

The auction does not flow as smoothly if West asks for Slam Points. The problem is in spades – 3 SPs can be an ace or KQ – which are treated alike, so the relayer must do another lap to find out which. There is the danger of running out of room, because all 6-level bids by the asker are to play. (Some pairs continue DCB at the 6-level)

Guidelines for the choice of asks

- In general, SPs give a better picture of potential for slam, particularly if both hands are balanced.
- If the only queen that matters is in describer's long suit, it's sometimes better to ask for Kontrols.
- If you'd like to distinguish KQ from Ace early on, go for Kontrols. The key pointer is a singleton in relayer's hand.

Here's one where we stopped short after asking for SPs:

♠ A 10 8	♠ K Q J 3 2
♥ A K Q J 9 6	♥ 7 5 3
♦ 9	♦ A Q 6
♣ A 4 3	♣ Q 2

1♣	1♥	spades
1♠ ^R	3♦	5-3-3-2
3♥ ^{SPs}	4♦	8 SPs
4♥	4NT	♠ - yes, ♥ - no
5♣	5♦	♦ - 2 or 0
5♥	6♣	♣ - yes, ♠ - 2nd, ♥ - no
6♥	No	

West piked because East could have had

♠ Q J 5 3 2 ♥ 7 5 3 ♦ A K 6 ♣ K 2

since jacks count as second honours. 7♥ is 50% opposite that, though East might just as easily have had ♠KJ, ♦AQ & ♣K, when 7♥ by East is pretty good. Maybe it was worth a punt.

Less anguish if West asks for Kontrols:

1♣	1♥	
1♠	3♦	
3♠ ^{Ks}	4♣	3 Kontrols
4♦	4♠	♠ - yes, ♥ - no
4NT	5♦	♦ - yes, ♣ - no
5♥	5NT	♠Q, no ♥Q
7♥	No	

The Kontrol ask allows West to focus on the ♠Q and treat the minor queens as distractions.

4♦ End Signal

This Polish method makes effective use of bidding space for slam. It's an adjunct to denial cue bidding.

After describer has revealed shape, you have two bids to ask for strength and the five game bids are terminal.

Why do we need five ways to sign-off in game? Better to have a couple of ways to stop – 3NT and 4♦ – freeing the other bids as slam tries on hands unsuitable for DCB. Describer usually bids 4♥ over the 4♦ *end signal* but is allowed to resurrect instead, as per usual.

Typical in the relay world is to use game bids as RKC Blackwood in various suits. This is one method, not universal. Let's say describer has just bid 3♥ to show shape. Then

3♥	3♠	asks for SPs
	4♣	Kontrol ask
	4♦	"bid 4♥ and pass my next bid"
	4♥	RKC in describer's longest suit
	4♠	RKC in second suit
	4NT	RKC in third suit
	5♣	RKC in short suit

This is a good method, if dangerous. If partner passes your keycard ask a few times, you'll suggest that the experiment has failed. It's worth persevering. This hastily-constructed hand shows why:

♠ 5	♠ AK 7
♥ AK 10 6 4	♥ QJ 8 7 2
♦ Q 5	♦ J 10 4 3
♣ AK 9 4 3	♣ 8
WEST	EAST
	1♥
1♠ ^R	1NT diamonds
2♣ ^R	3♦ 3-5-4-1

So far, so good. Partner's shape takes care of the club losers, now all we need is two out of the ♠A and ♦AK. Asking for Kontrols won't work this time. (You find out that East has AK in spades or diamonds but nailing it takes you over the top)

A better solution is to forget about checking on strength. Instead ask for key cards – in diamonds!

...	3♦	3-5-4-1
4♣	RKC in hearts (1430 for us)	
4♦	end signal	
4♥	RKC in diamonds	

So West bids 4♥ over 3♦ to play 5♥ opposite the actual East hand, but 6♥ opposite two key cards for diamonds. You'll be able to reach 7♥ opposite ♠A & ♦AK.

The end signal takes precedence over strength asks.

All very thorough and sound but we don't use this!

Too much like hard work and a bit dangerous. (With the hand in the example, West should bid 2NT over 1♥, not relay)

An alternative use for 4♦

This method, derived from another idea from David Morgan, is to use 4♦ as a **mild slam try**. This is simpler, safe and works well when trump quality is the issue. Sometimes you can see that DCB won't do the trick.

After shape is out, game bids are to play, while 4♦ is a slam try in an undisclosed suit. It says "My next bid will be a natural invitation to slam, requiring good trumps."

It shows a hand that needs extras – nominally Base +2 SPs &/or Base +1 Controls – plus **good trumps**, meaning two top honours (AKQ)¹ in a 4+ suit, or one in a shorter suit. Describer – who has no idea of the trump suit – bids 4♥ with all minimums, otherwise bids bad potential trump suits up the line, **Flint**-style.

4♦ ^{MST}	4♥	any minimum; <u>or</u> extras with poor hearts
	4♠	extras, good hearts but bad spades
	4NT	resurrection values if unlimited, then 5♣ asks for SPs (good majors and more stuff if limited)
	5♣	extras, good majors, bad clubs
	5♦	extras, diamonds only weak suit

You can think of this as **natural DCB**.

1 Or three of the top five, maybe

For instance:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	EAST	
♠ A 8 5	1♣	1♠	hearts
♥ A 7 3	1NT	3♥	3-6-3-1
♦ A 3	?		
♣ K Q 10 5 3			

Well, what do we need?

♠ K x x ♥ K Q x x x x ♦ K x x ♣ x

would be nice, a hand with the requisite extras and good trumps. A Slam Point ask followed by DCB is not ideal here, pushing you too high on unsuitable hands. Try it and watch the wheels spin.

Better to make a *mild slam try* by bidding 4♦ over 3♥ to tell describer to bid bad suits upwards with extras. In this case, East would bid 5♣! to say “**Extras** with ♥ – 2, ♠ – 1, ♣ – 0.”

Other candidates are hands where responder's shape comes out at 3♠ or higher:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	EAST	
♠ A K 7 4	1♣	3NT	3-3-0-7 ²
♥ K Q 5	?		
♦ A 9 7 6 5			
♣ Q			

3NT might fail, while 5♣ is safer than 4♠. Slam doesn't need much, a key card is the ♣J. For instance:

♠ x x x ♥ A x x ♦ — ♣ K J 10 x x x x

This is tailor-made for 4♦. Partner can accept with good trumps and Base +1 Controls, as here. The auction proceeded

4♦ ^{MST}	4♠	extras, ♥ - yes, ♠ - no
5♣ ^{invite}	6♣	♣ - 2 !?

4♦ then 5♣ functioned as a slam invite, asking for chunky trumps. East figured that ♣KJT was enough.

2 And 5-8 SPs. East would bid 4♣ with 9 SPs, or a chunky 8 SPs.

In relay auctions following a negative, there is often insufficient space to grind through DCB. Again 4♦ can save you:

♠ A Q 7 6 5	♠ K 10 7
♥ A K J 6 3	♥ 8 7 2
♦ A	♦ J 10 4 3
♣ A J	♣ K 7 5
WEST	EAST
1♣	1♦
1♥ ¹⁹⁺	2♠ 5-7 bal, no Major
2NT ^R	3NT 3-3-4-3 or 3-3-3-4 ³
4♦ ^{MST}	4♥ min, or no ♥ honour
4♣ ^{invite}	5♣ ♠ - yes, ♣ - yes
6♠	No

East accepts with a top spade honour and extras, showing the club control *en route*.

No fun via DCB. West could end up at the 5-level opposite three small in each major.

The asker can also use the mild try after asking for SPs. Then it simply focusses on trump quality. The problem hands for DCB are those where a queen in a shortish suit is crucial:

♠ K 9	♠ A Q 6 3
♥ A K 8 7 2	♥ J 6 4
♦ K Q 10 8 5	♦ 7 2
♣ K	♣ A Q 8 3
WEST	EAST
1♠ ^R	1♦ spades
2♦ ^R	2♣ balanced
3♦ ^{SPs}	3♣ 4-3-2-4
4♦ ^{MST}	3NT 8 SPs
No	4♥ ♥ - no

A comfortable stop. East can't have three aces, so slam requires the ♥Q. West would bid 6♥ over any other reply.

3 3NT is a threshold. Don't split these.

High Level Competition

Much of the rest of this chapter is about bidding slams in competition. The threat of DCB auctions forces opponents to intervene on weak hands. We certainly give them room.

Many pairs give up on slam when the opponents get active, muttering something about badly breaking suits. "We'd have got there but East overcalled 3♥, so we were stuffed."

Last Train

In contested auctions when slam might be on but space is tight, we need a bid that says "I have a slam try but I'm not good enough to force us to the next level". Enter *Last Train*:

W/Both		♠ K Q J 9 5 2	
		♥ 8	
		♦ 9 7 5	
		♣ Q 10 4	
♠ A 8			♠ 7 4
♥ A J 9 4 2			♥ K 7 6 3
♦ K 10 8 6 4			♦ A
♣ 6			♣ A K J 8 7 3
		♠ 10 6 3	
		♥ Q 10 5	
		♦ Q J 3 2	
		♣ 9 5 2	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	2♠	4♣	No
4♦ <i>Last Train</i>		5♥ spades?	
5♠		6♥ (or maybe 5NT)	

The Standard pairs did better here, because East knew about the 9-card fit. Some just bid a crude 5♥ straight off.

At our table, the fit-jump to 4♣ was a good start but left West with a problem, because 4♣ need not have been a hand as good as that. East might simply have been setting up the defence, or a save against 4♠. For instance, East would bid 4♣ with this:

♠ 6 3 ♥ Q 9 7 4 3 ♦ 6 ♣ A Q J 5 3

to help opener decide what to do over 4♠ by South. To cater for this, we use 4♦ here as *Last Train*, meaning "I have useful cards – including decent trumps – if you are slam-minded."

4♦ does not show a diamond control. Just some good hand, not freaky enough to proceed past 4♥.

Last Train applies when there is **one step** between partner's fit-showing bid and a sign-off. If we swap East's minors, 4♦ can't be an each way bet. We would **not** play 4♦ by East as slammish.

Conversely, if there are **two** steps, opener can find a cue.

Michaels & Minors

After a jump overcall of our 1♣, responder bids pretty much as if their side had opened. This is how we use cues & weird jumps:

- Michaels versus a minor overcall, stopper ask versus a Major.
- Jumps to 4-of-a-minor are Leaping Michaels. We **don't** play **non-leaping** Michaels.
- 4-level Major cues show minors, 4NT is often natural.

Leaping Michaels is predicated on the idea that responder won't want to bypass 3NT on a hand with a long minor.

For the following, we assume that you are using *Suit Rubensohl* from the previous chapter. After our 1♣ (or 1NT) opening gets overcalled in a major, responder's suit bids are transfers.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	
1♣	2♥	2♠, 2NT	natural, <u>not</u> forcing
		3♣	diamonds, assuming Rubensohl
		3♦	stopper ask
		3♥/♠	spades / clubs
		4♣/♦	5-5 in spades & the bid minor, forcing
		4♥	minors
		4NT	natural, 14-16

No Rubensohl after a 2♣ or 2♦ overcall; a cue is major Michaels:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♣	2♦	?	♠ K 10 5 4 3
			♥ Q J 5 4 3
			♦ 5 4
			♣ 6

3♦ Michaels, more useful than a stopper ask.

For a once-a-year partnership tester, you could try the following over their natural 2-of-a-minor overcall or opening:

4♣ = other minor & hearts, 4♦ = other minor & spades.

Choice of Games

As Led Zeppelin observed, sometimes words have two meanings. A cue is a bid of the enemy suit, while a bid showing 1st or 2nd round control in a suit is a *control bid*. (Okay, DCB should be called Denial Control Bidding)

What's more, there are two sorts of cue bids – those that agree partner's suit and the *Unassuming Cues*, looking for the best strain:

♠ A K 10 6	♠ Q 8 7 5
♥ K Q 7	♥ J 6 4 3
♦ J 5	♦ 9 7 2
♣ A K Q 7	♣ 8 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	3♦	No	No
Dbl	No	3♥	No
?			

Most would play 4♦ here as a slam try agreeing hearts.

We like it as *choice of games*, suggesting this shape. Why fail to 4-2 hearts when 4♠ is a decent spot? West can hardly bid 3♠ instead; that would show five. We give up 4♦ as a unilateral slam try in hearts. The motto is "strain before strength".

Many uses for 4NT

4NT fills multiple roles. It could be:

- takeout – minors or choice of strains
- natural, inviting slam
- RKC Blackwood (always 1430 for us)
- a pivot in a cueing auction (rare for us)
- simple Blackwood (never for us)

Few pairs are on top of this. Strong clubbers are often under real pressure from preempts, still groping for a fit, so we need to get the priorities right.

4NT as natural

It's time to reclaim this lost slam bidding weapon. When they preempt, it's good to be able to show slam interest without making a premature commitment to some suit.

Hands worth an invite to slam in notrumps are quite common after a 1♣ opening:

♠ A Q 7 2	♠ J 6
♥ 4	♥ A Q 7
♦ A Q 7 5	♦ J 10 9
♣ K J 9 4	♣ A Q 10 8 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♣	3♥	?

4NT natural, around 14-16. Double is no good, because 4NT over 3♠ by opener would then be key card. At the table, West might have passed the 4NT invite. Instead, the bold 5♥ got them to 6♣.

RKC Blackwood (1430 in all suits)

A weak hand cannot Blackwood. 4NT is RKC if

- a suit is agreed. This applies after a raise, a splinter or a fit-showing jump. Still applies after one or two cues.
- it's a jump and partner has shown a suit.
- it's not a jump but partner has opened any **long** suit (5+) or shown a long **Major**, or bid a major in response to a takeout double; or preempted 4-of-a-minor.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	3♠	4♥	No
<u>4NT</u>			

This is RKC because partner has a long major. 4♠ would be *Unassuming*, initially suggesting minors.

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ A Q 8 5 3	1♣	3♥	4♣	No
♥ J 5	?			
♦ A K J 5				
♣ K 7				

4NT here would be natural. "I wanted to bid 3NT."

4♠ would show a better suit so West bids 4♥ to say "Forget about slam for the moment. Let's at least play the right strain." East is encouraged to bid 4♠ with three of them.

Since 4♥ is Unassuming and 4NT is natural, West has no direct way to check out key cards for 6♣. Tough but that's our style.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	3♠	Dbl	No
4♥	No	<u>4NT</u>	

This is RKC but would be natural over 4-of-a-minor.

With extras and doubts about strain, say 1-3-4-5, East can bid 4♠.

It's a bit different if the last bid was 4-something by them.

If double would be takeout, 4NT is RKC.

If double would be fit, such as 1♥ - (4♠) - X, then 4NT is takeout.

Kickback

Kickback is another idea associated with Jeff Rubens. When 4NT is natural, we could do with a way to check on key cards, one that saves space.

As we have seen, Blackwood can be a curse:

♠ K Q 5	♠ A 9 8 6
♥ A Q 8 4	♥ K 6
♦ A Q 6 3	♦ K J 8 5
♣ Q 4	♣ K 10 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣ ¹⁶⁺	3♣	Dbl	No
3♥		?	

Here we have 12 easy tricks in 6NT on a combined 33-count, yet East has a tough call. Many would ask for key cards via 4NT, then blast 6NT, waiting anxiously for dummy to track. Not so good if one of West's queens is a two. (A Scamp East might foresee this and bid 4NT directly over 3♣)

By our guidelines, 4NT over 3♥ would be RKC, creating the problem above. Kickback provides a solution.

Kickback is a **jump to the 4-level, one step above a raise**:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	
1♣ ¹⁶⁺	3♣	Dbl	
3♥		4♠ ^{KB}	Allows 4NT to be natural

4♥ is KB over 3♦, 4NT over 3♠.

Kickback has real merit but is too complex for us, given it would mostly apply in contested auctions, when one of us would be likely to forget.

Here are more slams from play, held over from Chapter 7:

Choice of coups

S/Both		♠ AK 8 5 4		
		♥ 6 5		
		♦ K		
		♣ A 10 9 7 5		
♠ 10 3 2			♠ J 6	
♥ K Q 10 8 3			♥ A J 9 7 4	
♦ 9			♦ 10 7 6 4 3	
♣ J 8 4 2			♣ 6	
		♠ Q 9 7		
		♥ 2		
		♦ A Q J 8 5 2		
		♣ K Q 3		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
No	2♥ ^R	No	2♦	
	3♦ ^R		3♣	MS (1 up)
	3♠ ^{SPs}		3♥	3-1-6-3
	4♥ ^{DCB}		4♦	8 SPs
	4NT ^{DCB}		4♠	♦ - 0 or 2
	6♣!?		5NT	♠, ♣ - yes, ♥ - no
				♦ - AQJ

That went well, thanks to silent opponents.

South was known by both to have two diamond honours.
(Why? 8 SPs with a maximum of 6 SPs in the other suits)

5♠ would have denied a third honour, so 5NT showed the ♦J, no further info. North looks to have been unsure of all this; 6♣ seemed a good spot anyway.

South was displeased for a while, given they had missed the solid 84% 6♦. However, careful play vindicated partner's choice.

After ruffing the second heart, ♣K, ♦K, ♣Q revealed the awkward news. A diamond ruff revealed the pleasing 5-1 break, meaning that 6♦ was going down.

After that trump reduction, declarer played ♠A-Q then pitched spades on diamonds, collecting the ♣J *en route*.

Three honours

♠ A 4	♠ K 10 3
♥ AK 7	♥ 9 6
♦ 5 4	♦ AK Q 9 8
♣ AK Q 9 4 3	♣ 10 6 2

	1NT	12-15 balanced, no major
2♣ ^R	2♦	5 diamonds
2♥ ^R	2NT	3-2-5-3
3♣ ^{SPs}	3♥	8 SPs
3♣ ^{DCB}	3NT	♦ - 0 or 2
4♣ ^{DCB}	4♥	♠ - yes, ♣ - 0 or 2
4♣ ^{DCB}	4NT	♥ - 0 or 2
5♣ ^{DCB}	5♠	♦ - 3, ♠ - no 2nd
7NT		

East must confirm honours in diamonds since, for all he knows, partner may not be able to tell whether he has this, or AK in clubs or hearts. East is following this rarely used scheme:

5♣ ^{DCB}	5♦	♦ - 0
	5♥	♦ - 2 only
	5♠	♦ - 3, no 2nd ♠
	5NT	♦ - 3, 2nd ♠

To save time, West could have simply bid 7NT over 3♥. (Any 8 SP hand makes 13 tricks)

Trainwreck

♠ J 10 8 7 2	♠ AK Q 9 6 3
♥ K 9 7 5 3 2	♥ 10
♦ A	♦ J
♣ 2	♣ Q J 7 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	2♦	4♦	5♦
5♠	No	6♠?	End

1♠ is acceptable, though prefer the ace in a long suit. 4♦ was a *defined raise*, so double by West would have been penalty.

5♠ was an attempt to play there. With slam interest, West would have bid 5♥ *last train*.

Chapter 15

They open

This chapter doesn't seem to belong but the book has become a repository for all our agreements so bear with us. Even cardplay gets a short airing here.

Also, our methods when our strong club gets overcalled are similar to auctions where they open.

We overcall

While we don't want to impinge too much upon your defensive methods, it makes sense to use a consistent competitive style, no matter who opens. This is how we respond to overcalls, perhaps you do the same:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣ ³⁺	1♠	No	?
1NT	8-11		
2♣	general force, <u>may</u> have support		
2♦/♥	not forcing ¹		
3♣	cue raise, four trumps		
3♦/♥	forcing for us		
3♠	mixed raise		

This bears a pleasing similarity to relay – one response to show strength; most others non-forcing.

What do you need to cue at the 2-level?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	SOUTH'S HAND
1♦	1♠	No	?	♠ 8 7
				♥ K J 8 7 6
				♦ J 6
				♣ A K 6 5

2♦ is what the English call an *unassuming cue bid*. It's unwise to reserve this for hands with primary support.

If East had raised diamonds, double would show this hand.

1 But a new suit opposite a 2-level overcall is forcing.

If East bids 2♣, a third suit double shows length in the unbid suit plus some support. The textbook term is *Snapdragon*.

For an alternative, there is merit – and some complexity – in *Rubens Advances*.

In general, we prefer to use the opponents' suit as a pivot to find the right strain, rather than another way to raise. We extend this to higher levels – consider the hand above after West opens 3♦ and partner bids 3♠. Now 4♦ by South says “Let’s find the right game.”

ASPRO

This is our method against a 1NT opening or strong club. In lands where methods are tightly controlled, would-be system designers take out their frustration by building a better 1NT-trap. There are scores on the market. ASPRO, the English² version of ASTRO, is better than most. We’ve used it for decades and see no need to change. This is it:

1NT	Dbl	penalty versus any 1NT
	2♣	hearts & another
	2♦	spades & a minor
	2♥/♠	natural, usually 6-carders
	2NT	minors
	3♣/♦	intermediate, though wide-range
	3♥+	preemptive

ASPRO fits with our obsessive focus on majors.

As a political aside, DONT is a pet hate. Hate having to hide a long major and can’t see the point in proudly advertising some piddling 4-card minor.

Double is often big and balanced, so partner is expected to run to a long suit with a weak hand.

The Aspro bids show 5-4 either way, not enough to double, typically 10-15 pts. The canapé hands need to be a bit stronger since you are likely to finish at the 3-level.

2 Many English pairs have progressed to ASPTRO, where 2♣ = hearts & another, 2♦ = spades & another. With both majors, anchor on the 4-carder. ASPTRO is said to have theoretical advantages but we’re not convinced.

These are the responses:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1NT	2♣	No	?
Pass	long clubs and weak		
2♦	non-forcing “relay” for partner’s 5-card suit		
2♥	to play, often 3 trumps		
2♠	decent 5-carder		
3♣/♦	6-card suits, constructive		
2NT	asks for the second suit		
3♥	invitational		

Use the 2♦ relay to play in partner’s long suit. The overcaller will pass this with five diamonds, bid 2♥ with five of them, or show a long second suit. (2♠ suggests five³; 3♣/♦ show canapé maximums; 2NT shows 5+ clubs and a minimum)

To stay low in overcaller’s second suit, start by bidding the step, then later suit bids become pass or correct.

To invite, advancer starts with the 2♦ relay, planning to bid 2NT or 3♥ over a 2♥ rebid.

It can take a while to find a playable spot:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	SOUTH’S HAND
1NT	2♣	No	2♦	♠ J 5 3
No	2♥	No	?	♥ 8
				♦ A 6 5 4
				♣ Q 10 6 4 3

Scramble for partner’s second suit via 2♠.

Continuations over an Aspro 2♦ are similar, except that the overcaller will never pass the 2♥ relay.

If an Aspro 2♣ gets doubled, pass shows a preference for clubs over hearts; 2♦ is natural; redouble takes the place of the 2♦ relay.

Aspro applies unchanged in the passout seat. It’s similar by a passed hand, except that double shows majors.

While we’re on the subject, a double of Stayman opposite a strong notrump (15+) shows clubs. Against a weaker notrump, double of Stayman suggests a penalty double of 1NT.

3 it’s sometimes okay to rebid 2♠ with four, given that Aspro is brave but acceptable with 4-4 in the majors.

They open a Strong Club

For simplicity, we also use Aspro as a defence to a strong 1♣ or 2♣.

(1♣ ¹⁶⁺)	Pass	could be good
	Dbl	hearts & another
	1♦	spades & a minor
	1♥/♠	5-card suits, say 6-14 pts
	1NT	minors, 5+4
	2♣+	preemptive

The Aspro bids can be 4-4 if not vul. This time, the step by advancer asks for the second suit and 1NT is natural.

Double over a 1♦ negative shows majors.

Cues

People love to cue and we use the popular gadgets. Our Michaels cues are weak (say 8-11) or strong (16+):

(1♣)	2♣	natural vs 2+ or fewer otherwise Michaels, occasionally 4-5
(1♣)	2NT	minors vs 2+ otherwise red suits
(1♦)	2♦	natural vs a 2+ opening otherwise Michaels
(1♥/♠)	2♥/♠	the other major plus a minor, 5-5

Over these last two, 2NT asks for the minor while 3♣/♦ are to play. Yes, many would play 3♣ as correctable, with 2NT always strong.

Many pairs also play Michaels over a short 1♣ opening but that's a bit silly. Take the chance to cast shade on their method:

NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♣ ²⁺	?	♠ 6
		♥ A J 5 4
		♦ K 9
		♣ K J 10 7 4 2

Hate being told to pass with these cards. 2♣ is so right. Note that your length sucks clubs from the North hand, not that you really mind long clubs on your right.

A 2♣ overcall preempts their spade fit and strains their negative double. I suppose you could pass and back in with 3♣ over 2♣ but that's too slow. 2♣ Michaels is not useless but hands with both majors can often afford to start with 1♠.

However, we use Michaels over a better minor 1♣ or 1♦, which could be 3-carders.

This looks arbitrary but you have to draw the line somewhere. In these days of **transfer responses**, some people will open 1♣ on all balanced hands without a 5-card major, even 3-3-5-2.

When they bid two suits, there's no need to drown in cue bids:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	No	1♠	?
Dbl	takeout		
1NT	15-18, system on		
2♣	natural vs 2+		
	otherwise red suits, 5-5		
2♠	natural, good suit		
2NT	minors vs 2+		
	otherwise red and shapely		

I bet you can find a pair that uses all five calls to show various red 2-suiters. Here's cause for thought:

♠ A 8 6 ♥ 8 6 ♦ 9 3 ♣ K Q 10 9 4 3

How do you propose to get partner to lead a club against 3NT? We would have to pass if 1♣ showed 3+ but maybe it's time to change.

There is still the issue of cue raises. Against a 3+ minor, advancer can still bid their suit as an unassuming cue bid. However, if the opening is a modern Precision 1♦ (2+) or genuine short club, we lose the cue. In these auctions, advancer's change of suit is forcing.

Takeout doubles

Nothing radical here. In competitive auctions, it's vital to show shape early, so we use traditional methods – 1-level overcalls suggest decent suits and around 9-16 pts; double could be a 10-count with ideal shape. Doubles of short minor openings focus on majors, so don't expect support for the unbid minor.

Equal Level Conversion

Traditionally, a double followed by a new suit showed a hand too strong to overcall. That's fine but there is a trend towards simple overcalls on quite strong hands:

NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♦	?	♠ 6
		♥ AKJ 7 5
		♦ AK 5
		♣ K 10 7 5

Nearly too strong for 1♥. 20 years ago, many would double but nowadays most good players would show their suit to avoid the pain of partner's spades.

What about this:

NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♦	?	♠ A Q 6 5
		♥ 7 5
		♦ A 5
		♣ A 10 6 5 4

In a bidding forum, you might get votes for Pass, 1♠, 2♣, double and 1NT. Doubling offshape is frowned upon because you'd be stuck if partner bid 1♥ or 2♥. That's true if double then a new suit shows a strong 1-suiter.

We like to double with these hands, intending to bid 1♠ over 1♥ to suggest four spades, probably five clubs and sound values. It's in line with the canapé principle – showing each suit at its preferred level. In principle, double followed by the cheapest bid shows a 2-suiter:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
		1♦	Dbl	♠ A Q 6 5
No	2♣	No	?	♥ A J 10 5
				♦ A 5 3 2
				♣ 6

Hope you can live with East's double. 2♦ now suggests both majors, angling for the 4-3 fit rather than the 5-1. A delayed 2♥ or 2♠ would show a strong 1-suiter. Of course, 2♦ could also be some stronger hand with support, it's *unassuming*.

This method is not mainstream and not quite sound. We use it partly to achieve consistency with strong club auctions:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
			1♣	♠ K J 5 4 3
2♣	No	No	?	♥ A Q 9 6
				♦ 9 3
				♣ A J

Not 2♠ with those hearts. Much better to double then convert 2♦ to 2♠, showing this hand. This is clearly Equal Level Conversion because you would have bid 2♠ or 3♠ straight away with a 1-suiter.

There is an important distinction to be made. ELC does not apply in negative free bid auctions following a 1♦ or 1♥ opening, when double then a suit could be a 1-suiter and is forcing.

Dealing with artificial calls

None of the following is central to Scamp, though players sometimes use their Multis over our strong club.

The meaning of double depends on the meaning of their call. Don't spend ages concocting the best defence to the latest wheeze. Leave that to the ACBL lawyers. Good to have something *generic*.

- (a) Their bid shows length in one **specific** suit
(transfers, Aspro, Namyats)

We use double as takeout of the **shown** suit:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	SOUTH'S HAND
1NT	No	2♦ ^{transfer}	?	♠ K 10 5 4
				♥ 6
				♦ A J 5
				♣ K 10 7 6 5

When East transfers, double shows this. Conversely, to pass 2♦ then double 2♥ is co-operative – a hand that would have doubled 1NT for penalty, so big balanced. A direct 2♥ is Michaels.

This scheme allows us to compete in comparative safety on these shapely hands. If your style is to pass with this and protect when 2♥ comes around, you will sometimes be left holding the baby on

hands where nothing makes, or be shut out by a super-accept.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1NT	2♣ ^{Aspro}	?	♠ Q10 5 4
			♥ K10 6 4
			♦ 9 5
			♣ A J 4

2♣ shows hearts and another. Double would be takeout of hearts so you pass, planning to double two of a major for penalty. This pass is not forcing – good luck to them if North gets to play 2♣ undoubled. 2♥ by East would be natural. When their shown suit could be a 4-carder, we bid it naturally.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	SOUTH'S HAND
1♣ ²⁺	No	1♥ ^{4+♠}	?	♠ A Q10 5 4
				♥ 6
				♦ 10 8 5 2
				♣ A J 3

Overcall 1♠. Transfer responses are good but present this extra option. If we swap the majors, then double as takeout of spades.

- (b) Their artificial call shows two suits, excluding the bid suit (Landy, Flannery, unusual 2NT opening, Ekrens)

Here we use double to show balanced values and a desire to defend. (Double of a 1NT opening or Cappelletti 2♣ is similar)

Overcalling instead is natural, unless it's a bid in a suit where they have shown five cards.

NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
2♦ ^{majors}	?	♠ J 6
		♥ A10 6 3
		♦ A K 9
		♣ A Q10 6

If 2♦ shows 5+4 majors, East doubles to show "values", typically 16+ balanced. If South then bids 2♥, you hope to pass partner's takeout double, else try 2NT. If 2♠ comes back to you, double for takeout. Note that a 2♥ or 2♠ overcall by you would be natural.

- (c) Their artificial call shows an unknown one suiter, from a group of two (Multi 2♦; 2♠ over 1NT to show a minor; 3NT as a minor preempt)

Against the Multi, common is double with some good hand, the rest natural. That's okay but we use this generic defence:

Double = takeout of the higher ranking possibility (spades)

Suit step = takeout of the other suit (hearts)

NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
2♦ ^{Multi}	?	♠ 6
		♥ A Q 9 5 3
		♦ Q 8 3
		♣ K Q 10 7

Double says "I would have doubled 2♠ for takeout." You miss out on the natural 2♥ overcall because 2♥ is takeout of hearts. *Tant pis*.

- (d) The bidder might (50%) hold the suit bid
(unanchored 2-suiters, such as 2♠ = reds or blacks)

These are *Brown Sticker* calls. Some also use them over our strong club. We use double to suggest length in the bid suit, plus it's companion:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♣ ¹⁶⁺	1♥ ^{M/m}	?	♠ A Q 7 3
			♥ Q 10 7
			♦ 5 3
			♣ 10 6 3 2

1♥ might show "Majors or minors", for instance. Double says "I think he's got minors, cos I have majors." 4-3 shape is enough.

Artificial intervention will fall into one of those categories, which decides the meaning of double. Say their opening bid is 2♦ (or they overcall our 1♣ with 2♦). Then:

If 2♦ shows:

hearts
both majors
a long major
blacks or reds

Double is:

takeout of hearts (a)
balanced-ish values (b)
takeout of spades, the top suit (c)
reds. I think he has blacks (d)
(shows the **bid** suit plus it's companion)

Some pairs use random overcalls or wonder bids over a strong 1♣. With *wonder bids* (which show the bid suit, or the other three) we assume their call is natural, except that a "cue" bid is natural.

You will come up against Multis with explanations as long as your arm. "2♦ = a weak two in hearts; or 5-5 in the blacks; or an Acol Two in any suit; or 23-24 balanced; or ..." For the purpose of deciding the meaning of double, we ignore the strong hands and focus on the weak 1-suiter, if any. So double here = takeout of hearts.

Cardplay

Common these days is *3rds & 5ths vs suit, 4ths vs notrumps; UDCA; ace for attitude, king for count*. It will come as no surprise that we don't do all of that.

As an aside, a frequent criticism of relay pairs is that we devote a lot of time and energy to bidding and system design. As a result, our cardplay suffers. There may be some truth in that ...

Our honour leads are "firsts and thirds" against suit and notrumps, meaning top or third highest honour. To put it another way, we overlead straight sequences and underlead interior sequences. This table is similar to the one recommended in Helge Vinje's *New Ideas in Defensive Play* (1979):

Against suit

Ace	AKx
King	KQx
Queen	QJx, AKQx
Jack	JTx, KQJx
Ten	T9x, KJTx
Nine	KT9x, QT9x

Notrumps

AKx
AKJx, KQTx
+ AQJx
+ AJTx
+ AT9x

The "two card difference" principle resolves most ambiguities.

There are gains and losses. Here is a loss:

♠ J	♠ A Q 3
	♠ 8 4 2

Playing against us, South can be reasonably confident that East has the ♠K, so won't play the ♠Q at trick one. Fair point. To counter, we need to deviate from the agreement. Occasionally ...

Sometimes the honest card is a clear winner:

♠ J	♠ 9 6	♠ Q 7 2
	♠ A	

East will realise that South has the ♠K and know to look elsewhere.

Here is one from recent play:

S/EW	♠ J 8 6	
	♥ K J 8 7 2	
	♦ J 9 7 5	
	♣ 4	
♠ Q 4		♠ K 10 5 3 2
♥ 10 9		♥ 3
♦ Q 10 6 3		♦ 8 4 2
♣ J 10 5 3 2		♣ A 9 7 6
	♠ A 9 7	
	♥ A Q 6 5 4	
	♦ A K	
	♣ K Q 8	

When West led the ♣J against South's 6♥, East eventually worked out to duck. Playing standard leads, East would need to consider partner having ♣KJTxx. Not so easy.

Leading the king from KQx will focus partner's attention on the Bath Coup. The "King for count" school has issues here. They would (should) lead the **queen** from KQx, though that creates cascading issues:

	♠ 9 6 3	
♠ Q		♠ 10 7 2
	♠ A	

If partner has QJx, it's good to encourage. If KQx, it's bad.

With spot cards leads, it's thirds and fifths versus suit and notrumps for us, switching to attitude mid-game.

The world prefers fourths or attitude against notrumps, maybe because third in line is sometimes too valuable to lead:

	♠ 9 5 2	
♠ Q 10 8 3		♠ J 4
	♠ A K 7 6	

By leading the ♠3, West can make two tricks by force, pinning dummy's ♠9. Not so good if the first trick instead goes ♠8-9-J-K.

So our style is "3rds & 5ths, not strict."

Good raise and ELC

♠ AK 7 6		♠ 10 5	
♥ J		♥ AQ 5	
♦ 9 7 5 3		♦ AQ J 10 8 4	
♣ 10 8 7 3		♣ J 9	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	2♦	2♥
3♦	No	3NT	End

West might double but East usually won't have four spades, preferring an ELC double with that shape.

3♦ showed a good raise, so East had an easy 3NT bid. With fewer useful cards, West would have bid 2NT as a competitive raise.

Don't cue raise overcalls

S/Both	♠ K 9 8		
	♥ 10 6 2		
	♦ J 10 6 5		
	♣ 8 7 6		
♠ 5 4		♠ J 2	
♥ A J 9 5 4 3		♥ 8	
♦ 8		♦ A J 10 4 3	
♣ K Q 4 3		♣ A 10 9 5 2	
	♠ A Q 10 7 6 3		
	♥ K Q 7		
	♦ Q 9 2		
	♣ J		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
2♥	No	2♠	No
3♣	No	4♣	No
4♥	No	5♣	End

If 2♠ shows a heart raise, East might guess to bid 3♦ instead. That might see them stop in 3♥. No?

Better for 2♠ to take the place of the takeout double that you would have made if North had raised to 2♠.

Shape beats strength vs a Multi 2♦

♠ K 10 7 6 4	♠ A Q 9 5		
♥ Q 9 3	♥ 6		
♦ J 7	♦ K Q 8 5 4		
♣ K 10 3	♣ Q 7 6		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	2♦ ^{Multi}	2♥	2♠
3♠	No	4♠	End

2♥ showed a hand that would double a weak 2♥ for takeout. South's 2♠ showed some hearts but the horse soon bolted.

Much hilarity at the other table:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	2♦ ^{Multi}	No	2♠ ^{p/c}
No	No!	No	

Bravo teammates! I have always wanted to try that. +620 and -350 gave us 7 IMPs. Their East could not directly show a major takeout. Unlucky to strike our cagey teammate.

Even so, North might have tried the boring 4♥ (not 3♥!) instead of the psychic pass and maybe played there unmolested.

Section 3

Off Topic

16 Variations

Various Moscosos – 15 or 16+ – transfer openings – Scamp in America and England – Strong Pass – ferts – Spam

17 SPAM – SPAM – SPAM

Social outcasts – current version – 1♠ fert & responses – 7-12 openings – the strong pass – relay alternatives – nine hands from play

18 Arithmetic

Fibonacci & system design – different structures – relays over a Standard 1NT – Relay Precision – combination theory – points & slam points

Glossary

Definitions of some technical terms

Index

People and key concepts

All the relay structures

The nine structures in two pages

24 x 5431

Chapter 16

Variations

Sometimes it seems that there are as many relay systems as relay pairs. It's pleasing to have a surfeit of system designers who can learn from each other – but the diversity makes it hard to attract customers. Why learn an obscure Papuan dialect if the cannibals in the next valley finds it incomprehensible?

We reckon SCAMP has the edge but there are other methods, distinguished partly by the way they handle majors. Relay structures also vary quite a bit, so be prepared for some brain strain as you shop around for a relay partner.¹

Here are some Australian relay methods featuring 4-card majors:

	to show ♥	to show ♠	to show both
Scamp	1♥	1♦	1♠
Original Moscito	1♥	1♠	1♦
90s Moscito	1♥	1♠	1NT
Transfer openings	1♦	1♥	1♦/1♥

Moscito (Major Oriented Strong Club)

This is a strong club system devised by Paul Marston of Sydney via Christchurch, in the mid 80s. Here is the **original** opening structure:

- 1♣ 15+ any (17+ in 3rd & 4th seats)
- 1♦ both majors, 10-14
- 1♥ hearts, not spades
- 1♠ spades, not hearts
- 1NT no major, not necessarily balanced
- 2♣ 6+ clubs
- 2♦ 6+ diamonds

The 15+ 1♣ allows limited openings on flat 10-counts.

Opening 1♠ with spades is appealing. You preempt their hearts and partner is free to pass on a weak hand.

1 "Do we show high or low shortage first?" See *Chapter 18 - Arithmetic*.

A downside is damage to the responding structure – to relay with 1NT gives up a useful natural bid, as well as raising the structure by a step, losing symmetry. Take this common responding problem:

♠ 9 4 ♥ K 10 6 5 ♦ A 6 5 3 ♣ Q 5 4

Opposite an old Moscito 1♠, this is an uncomfortable pass, risking the 4-2 fit for no good reason. Next time I'll give you 1-4-4-4.

Some pairs relay with 2♣ instead, which returns the 1NT response at the expense of the club suit, raising the structure by an inconvenient two steps. This consumes important space for slam tries and messes with invitational sequences.

It's no fun having shapes like 6331 and 5431 come out at 3♠; nor responder needing to bid 3♣ to show the suit.

Opener – the known hand – will play most major contracts.

Another negative is the absence of a range probe.

There is heaps of space over 1♦ but it's not needed.

15 or 16 plus?

Our 16+ 1♣ may seem a bit conservative but we'll stick with it, even though many locals have switched to 15+ in 1st & 2nd seats. Note that English strong clubbers are obliged to stick to 16+ for most events, because of a curious EBU² regulation. See later.

There is a world-wide trend towards lighter openings. Shenkin's 17+ big club and 12-16 openings gave way to Precision's 16+.

Flat 11-counts rarely slip by Standard players these days, with mixed results.

A 15+ 1♣ allows you to open this, if you wish:

♠ A 5 ♥ K J 5 3 ♦ Q 8 6 2 ♣ 10 8 7

There are worse 10-counts but this hand crosses a boundary. An opening bid no longer says "There's a fair chance that the hand belongs to us."

With that 10-count it's good to be able to tell partner "10-14 with hearts" rather than "0-10 any" but why stop there?

Indeed the 14+ 1♣ is emerging. Soon we could see a 13+ 1♣ with 8-12 point limit openings.

That would be a system with a totally different strategic aim – to bid early and often – staking a strong claim on the 45% of hands spread either side of an average 10-count. See later!

90s Moscito

Using 1♦ to show both majors is an extravagant waste of a bid with great shape-showing potential. In the 90s, Sydney's Peter Buchen came up with a variation that proved popular, basically swapping 1♦ and 1NT. These are the openings:

1♣	15+ any
1♦	no major, 10-14
1♥	hearts, not spades
1♠	spades, not hearts
1NT	majors
2♣	weak two in a major, 5-carder not vul
2♦+	various weak 2-suiters

This structure is less top-heavy, though 1NT to show majors is less than ideal. Responder can hardly pass 1NT in case opener has a shapely hand, so you get the occasional silly contract of two of a major in a non-fit, though that is rare.

A big plus for the method is the release of the entire 2-level. The young Turks like to show weak 2-suiters, maybe even 4-4 not vul. When you combine these with the Multi 2♣, you have a powerful destructive arsenal, an area where Scamp is deficient.

90s Moscito seems to be a tactical improvement on the original, especially at matchpoints. We like those two openings but there's still the awkwardness of the 1♠ and 1NT openings. Again, opener will declare most major contracts.

1♦ appears overloaded and preemptable, though there is space to unravel all shapes over responder's 1♠ relay.

For simplicity:

	1♦	<i>no major</i>
1♠ ¹³⁺	1NT	12-15 bal, no M
	2♣	6+ clubs, 1-suiter (down 1)
	2♦	6+ diamonds, 1-suiter
	2♥+	minors

Transfer openings

Transfers give responder more room over a major, with the bonus of right-siding. This has become the Moscoto standard and the basis for some other strong club systems. We might do it this way:

1♣	16+
1♦	4+ hearts, could have spades
1♥	4+ spades, denies 4 hearts for us
1♠	5+ diamonds, no major
1NT	12-15 balanced, no major (Scamp)
2♣	5+ clubs, no major (Scamp)
2♦	mini-multi

Use the full Scamp relay structure over 1♦ & 1♥, simply adding 1♦ : 1♥ : 1♠ to show spades. (Then 2♣ bal, 2♦ Roman, etc)

Opening 1♠ with diamonds saves a relay step, avoids Scamp's 2♦ problem when responder has hearts, and allows a Multi. (Against this, you give the opponents more room and more options)

In response, 1NT can be natural-ish; the relay is 2♣.

	1♠	5+ diamonds, no major, not balanced
2♣ ^R	2♦	& 4 clubs (Square, include 5-5s)
	2♥	6+♦s, 1-suiter (Down One)

Paul Marston has moved some of the major hands to 1NT, changing it to 11-14 balanced, Acol-style. He has largely abandoned the Denied Major concept, preferring to group hands by type.

Is it better to open 1♦ or 1♥ with hearts?

Opening 1♦ with hearts has real advantages

1) Responder can bid a natural 1♠

♠ K10543 ♥ 6 ♦ K1062 ♣ 54

In Scamp, this hand must respond 1NT to a 1♥ opening. Playing transfer openings, responder happily bids 1♠. A plus but also a small negative. See later.

2) Responder – the unknown hand – will declare heart contracts

Good relay structures aim to conceal the relayer's hand. That's why the 1♥ response to a strong 1♣ shows spades. Doh!

The same should apply to 1-level openings.

And these disadvantages

1) Transfers give the defence more ways to compete

When an opponent opens 1♦ to show hearts, a sound method is to double for takeout of hearts. "I would have doubled a natural 1♥ opening". This in turn allows a natural 1♥ overcall, which is good against opener's possible four small.

An alternative defence – nearly as good – is to bid 1♥ for takeout and double 1♦ with something else – maybe diamonds; or a weak notrump; or a different takeout hand.

Transfers also make it easier for the opponents to collect penalties and harder for the opening side to do likewise.

(Of course you note that the same issues apply to the fashionable transfer responses to a short 1♣)

2) Responder can be caught with the wrong weak hand

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♦ ^{hearts}	?	♠ 10 4 3
		♥ 7 6 5
		♦ K 7
		♣ Q 8 6 4 2

This common hand should not be a problem. However, it's clearly wrong to pass in the non-fit. 1♥ is relay, while 1NT and 2♥ are distorted **overbids**. You'd have the same unappetising choices over 1♥ showing spades.

A big plus for Scamp – and earlier versions of Moscito – is the freedom to sit in 1-of-a-major, taking the strain off the single raise. The best Scamp auctions start 1♥ : 2♥ and 1♦ : 2♠. Constructive, and dangerous for the enemy. It's important not to contaminate these sequences with hands that would rather rest at the 1-level.

2b) If you can see the benefit of opening 1♠ to show diamonds – safety, space, frees 2♦ for a Multi – but would also like to be able to stop in one of a major, you might consider this compromise:

1♦	spades, could have hearts
1♥	hearts, not spades
1♠	5+ diamonds

1♦ : 1♥ is Scamp relay (1♠ = hearts)

1♦ : 1♠ is basically to play, weakish with some spades

3) Diluting the Denied Major

The denied major is a foundation of Scamp. Responder to a Scamp 1♥ opening can diagnose the enemy spade fit. (And cross out a 4-4 spade fit for our side) Opener can use spade bids in various ways.

Many transferrers open 1♦ with both majors – maybe with 5+♠s – so responder needs to bid 1♠ on a 4-carder, and/or conduct a revealing relay auction.

4) Lawmakers frown on artificial major openings

It's hard to restrict conventional **minor** openings, which have been with us for decades but legislators would still like majors to be pure. When Scamp was devised, local By-Laws required major openings to show "4+ cards in the bid suit." Even today, Scamp is legal in England at Level 4, while 1♥ = **spades is illegal there**. (2019)

Relay Precision

If partner insists on 5-card majors, you can try Relay Precision with a 14-16 1NT. 1♦ will be 11-13 balanced, or 11-15 unbalanced with 4+ diamonds; 2♣ could have a major; 2♦ shows short diamonds.

This structure allows responder to relay with 2♣ over most of the limit openings. Flick to *Chapter 18* to see our half-hearted attempt at designing a relay structure for modern Precision.

Scamp in America

It will be tough to crack the American market, partly because the ACBL has a history of opposition to transfer openings and relay.

However, there have been recent (2018) changes to the ACBL's *Convention Charts*. Now they make no reference to relay systems, though transfer **openings** are still highly restricted:

DISALLOWED for OPEN events

"3. In segments of fewer than six boards, an Artificial 1-level opening bid showing length only in a known suit other than the one opened, unless that bid is also Strong (15+) and Forcing."

Damn! Of course, transfer **responses** are fine, since some of the *good ol' boys* use those.

What to play? (At least in Pairs events)

Switching to openings based on Peter Buchen's **90s Moscito** would seem to be legal. (1♥/♠ natural, 1NT = both majors)

1NT is okay, since it's **forcing**. Responder relays with 2♣, same as over a Scamp 1♠. Use 2♦ to ask for opener's longer major.

(Okay, opening 1NT with 4-4-3+2 is uncomfortable. You can always open 1♥, then lie. Rarely ...)

Buchen used 2♣ as a Multi, which would be problematic, so switch to the Scamp 2♣. (6+♣s, or 5♣s & 4♦s)

That leaves 1♦ as natural (5+) or balanced no Major.

We would use 1♠ as a strong relay, (13+) 1♥ as a weak one:

1♦	11-15, no Major. Balanced or 5+♦s
1♠ ^R	1NT
2♣	11-13 balanced (maybe swap these?)
2♦	13-15 balanced
2♥+	& clubs, 5+♦s
	6+♦s, 1-suiter (Down One)

No relays – plus Rubensohl – after a direct overcall.

A bad system area is responding to the 1♠ opening. We would keep 1NT as natural and relay with 2♣, an awkward Two Steps Up. Despite the relay issues, this actually might be the best **matchpoint** variation. Plus it's ACBL-legal.

Meanwhile in England

Tournaments in England are governed by the 2019 EBU Blue Book. The default is Level 4, under which

7 B 1 1♣ or 1♦ Opening can

- *(ii) be forcing, with any meaning(s) as long as they all show at least 16 HCP*

We highlight this in case you plan to spend some time in England and are thinking of switching to a 15+ 1♣, only to find it's illegal. A very strange restriction!

- *(iii) have any meaning showing at least four cards in a specified suit, forcing or not*

So our 1♦ showing spades is fine.

7 B 2 1♥ and 1♠ Openings

Any meaning is permitted which shows four (or more) cards in the suit opened.

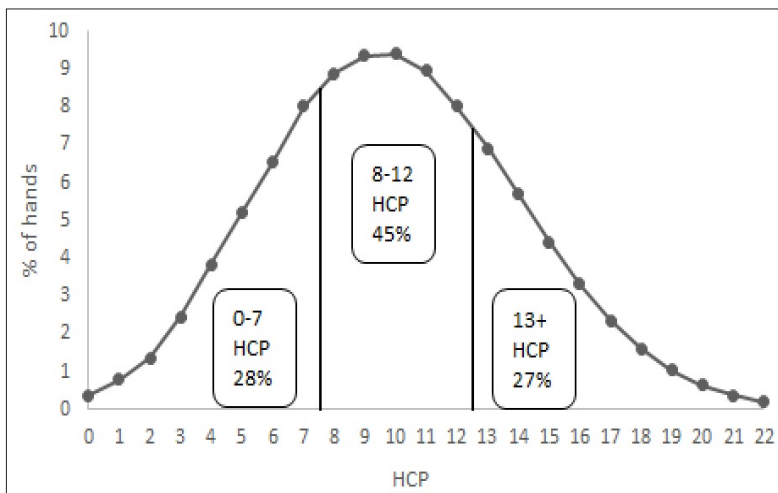
So Scamp is fine! This is a recent change. Retrograde of course to **ban transfer openings**, but it suits us.

Strong pass

Forcing pass systems first appeared in Australia around 1980. About a dozen pairs across the country played *Regres*, a Polish system. Bruce Neill, Alan Walsh and others represented Australia using the method.

Stephen Burgess and Paul Marston dominated Australian bridge in the 80s, using Marston's strong pass system. He came up with *Moscito* when contest organisers round the world started to muzzle *Highly Unusual Methods*.

A lot has been written about the virtues of strong pass systems. When the playing conditions allow, we often switch to SPAM, the strong pass equivalent of Scamp. The graph shows why:



Strong Pass systems devote their descriptive openings to the 45% of hands with 8-12 HCP. Standard bidders kick off around 60% of auctions with "I have some 0-11 count".

It's always your serve

Playing a natural system, you open with 12+ points and pass with fewer. This ignores preempts and shapely openings but it will do.

Fully 45% of hands have 8-12 points, a rich mother lode that most systems fail to tap. Surely it's better to make descriptive openings

with these hands, leaving two calls free – one to show 13+ pts, the other to show 0-7.

A good method is to pass with 0-7 pts, bid 1♣ with 13+ and make descriptive openings with the 8-12 pt hands. This is okay but a 13+ strong club is a bit awkward. How do you respond?

1♣	1♦	0-10 pts
	1♥	spades, 11+, etc

This is no good; 0-10 is too wide a range to nail down.

One solution is to split the negative, bidding 1♦ with 0-6 and 1♥ with 7-10, starting shape showing at 1♠, one step up. This is also messy. Over the *semi-positive* 1♥, opener presumably relays with 1♠, which stuffs both majors. Yuk.

Better than raising the bridge is to **lower the river**. The strong hands need all the space they can get. These problems are solved by passing with 13+ and opening something with 0-7 pts.

Most countries restrict such methods to the latter stages of major teams events, or ban them entirely.

Ferts

We like to switch to our strong pass system when it's legal. SPAM, immortalised by Monty Python, is derived from Scamp. In it's simplest form, we swap 1♣ with pass and alter the ranges.

1♣ shows 0-7, a tame *fertiliser*. The term comes from New Zealand – so-called because opening bids on random weak hands fertilise the auction, causing weird sequences to grow. Alternatively, fertiliser is a pile of shit.

Typical ferts have been 1♦ or 1♥. In Polish strong pass systems, the fert was usually 1♦. Marston's original strong pass system featured a 1♥ fert on 5-7 pts and a 1♠ fert on 0-4. This gung-ho approach came unstuck occasionally so he toned it down to 1♥ on 0-7. Later he tried a fert at the 2-level – opening 2♣ not vulnerable to show 5-7 flattish – not for the faint-hearted. The method had some success in the 1989 Bermuda Bowl.

Why it works

To pass with 13+ is not so great at times, when the rest of the field has started by showing suits, though relay helps restore the balance. It's true that a 13+ pass is a welcome mat to overcallers but that's not all bad, since they jeopardise their game prospects if they continually overcall on rubbish.

The 1♣ fert has proved a consistent winner, despite causing zero inconvenience to the next player. Both partners have a licence to mix it up after that start.

The big gainers are the other openings, all showing 8-12 pts. They have allowed us to have a real impact on hands that belong to the other side, as well as providing a perfect springboard for a strong partner. Here's a typical Spam 1♦ opening: (spades, 8-12 pts)

♠ K10853 ♥ 64 ♦ AQ5 ♣ 753

It's a shame to pass with this in first seat. If partner is weak, a spade lead might shoot 3NT. With a better hand opposite, you're a good chance to steal the pot. Give partner

♠ QJ42 ♥ K8 ♦ K7642 ♣ 82

and you'll often get away with 3♠, leaving them to work out whether they just missed 4♥. Note that this responding hand is also a Spam 1♦ opening, which the first hand would be equally happy to jump raise.

SPAM (Strong Pass Accenting Majors)

Once you have learnt Scamp, the switch to basic Spam is trivial. We are obliged to switch systems from time to time to please the rule makers, so the two systems are designed to complement each other. These are the opening bids in **simplified** Spam:

Pass	13+ any
1♣	0-7 any, some 8-counts
1♦	4+ spades, 8-12 pts
1♥	4+ hearts, 8-12 pts
1♠	majors, 8-12 pts
1NT	9-12 balanced, no major
2♣/♦	5+ suits, no major, 8-12 pts

The limited openings are the same as Scamp, with a lower point count. Note that the strength is the same as a positive to a Scamp 1♣, so remembering the base for Slam Points and Kontrols requires no head scratching. It's 5 & 2.

The responses remain the same, beefed up of course. Relay with a good 13+, other responses show around 8-12.

A Scamp pair can switch to Spam with 30 minutes discussion. Try it to see the advantage of describing your 8-12 counts straight off.

The strong pass

The responses are similar to Scamp, using the extra step to split the negative.

Pass	1♣	6-10 any
	1♦	0-6 any
	1♥	spades, not flat, 11+
	1♠	hearts, 11+
	1NT	diamonds, 11+, etc

Over the 1♦ negative, it's all natural (no more relays) except that the passer can bid 2♣ to force, like a Standard 2♣ opening.

Over 1♣, the semi-positive, the passer can relay with 1♦ on 17+, dropping into *compressed* shape-showing, the same structure as responding to a strong club. We chose this style to retain symmetry with Scamp.

Over the fert

This is how we respond to 1♣ (0-7 any):

1♣	No	Up to 12 pts or so
	1♦	Relay, typically 17+
	1♥/♠	natural, nominally 10-16
	1NT	14-17

The relay structure is Up One, as if opener had given a 1♣ negative.

Still, it's a clear misnomer to describe this sanitised system as a genuine strong pass system. It's basically a light-opening strong club system with a trivial swap at the bottom rung. To earn a guernsey, we would need to propel the fert up a few notches.

My heart bleeds

W/Both

♠ A J 7
♥ K 10 4 3
♦ 9 3 2
♣ K 10 5

♠ Q 9 6
♥ A J 9 5
♦ 10 6 4
♣ 8 4 2

♠ K 10 3 2
♥ Q 7
♦ A Q 8 5
♣ A J 7

♠ 8 5 4
♥ 8 6 2
♦ K J 7
♣ Q 9 6 3

WEST
1♦^{hearts}
End

NORTH
No

EAST
1NT

SOUTH
Dbl

West's **transfer opening** gave East a typical problem, since 1♥ is relay. Pass is a thought but East ventured 1NT, which pleased everyone.

The combined 17-count did not go well on South's ♠3 lead. In fact the defenders were able to take 10 tricks by endplaying dummy to give South a second club trick. -1100.

You didn't think I would present a good hand for transfer openings, did you?

A Scamp West might pass that square 11-count or risk 1♥, passed around to South's double.

Would North sit that for 800 on a spade lead?

Chapter 17

Spam–Spam–Spam

Strong pass systems attract a yellow sticker to warn of *Highly Unusual Methods* – HUM. In most countries, strong pass can only be used in long team matches, which seems the right approach. Even in World Championships, yellow systems are restricted to the final stages or banned entirely.

Soapbox

Surprisingly, the first World Championship event to come under the yoke was the World Junior Teams, with the lawmakers nodding sagely to each other "It's for their own good. Let them learn sound Standard bidding judgement. Maybe that will cure them of their silly ideas."

You may think that it's pointless to devise or learn a method that will rarely see the light of day. Many strong pass pairs have taken the hint and gone back to strong club methods.

This is a pity.

Diversity is a good thing. The game is becoming narrower, particularly in America where everyone plays virtually the same dull 2-over-1 system, down to the same TNT raises. Experience wins out when system design is tightly controlled.

Social Outcasts

If you wish to give strong pass a go, be prepared for some aggro at the table. Your opponents will probably grumble about the impost. They will imply that your methods have no merit, that you succeed because you catch opponents unprepared.

There is some truth in this.

Your match will start late as they ignore your suggested defence and design an *ad hoc* defence that won't work. Yours will be the last table to finish.

If you beat them, they might complain to sympathetic officials who will respond by tightening the noose for the next event. You will lose seating rights. Still interested?

SPAM – the current version

As we saw last chapter, Scamp can be converted to a strong pass system simply by swapping Pass with 1♣ and changing the ranges. This is a good method, since you get to show the 45% of hands with 8-12 points. It's a doddle to learn for Scampers.

But it's tame. It makes more sense to push the fert into the front line. There will be blood on the streets, most of it theirs, and you free 1♣ for descriptive duty. This is our (non-vulnerable) method:¹

Pass 13+ any

1♣ hearts, 7-12 pts, could have spades

1♦ spades, denies 4 hearts, 7-12

1♥ 7-12 balanced-ish, no major

1♠ 0-7 any

1NT 5+ diamonds, 7-12

2♣ 5+ clubs, 7-12

2♦ mini-multi: weak two in a major, 3-7 pts

2♥+ as you wish; Muiderberg for us

That's more like it! The aim is to parachute behind enemy lines and hurl a few grenades.

Note the wider range for the limit bids. We include the 7-counts because a modification to relay allows the 6-point range to be split in two at a low level. This also serves to tone down the fert. The wider range can be helpful in defence, reducing declarer's ability to place the cards.

Bidding 1♣ to show hearts and 1♦ to show spades is an old idea, going back to the *Little Major* of Terence Reese and Jeremy Flint. These days, such bids are called skip transfers or *submarine* openings.

1♠ fert (0-6, maybe 7)

The narrower range is a boon, taking pressure off responder. It also increases the chance that the opponents have game, when penalties are likely to be offset.

Flat 7-counts can go either way, depending on texture and the quality of the anchor suit.

♠ J 9 5 3 ♥ A 7 5 ♦ 10 7 6 4 ♣ Q 4

¹ We play strong pass not vulnerable, strong club vulnerable. No guts!

1♠ rather than 1♦ on this dull hand. (Having decided that, follow through by passing responder's 15-19 1NT response)

The fert is also a parking spot for unsound preempts, allowing your actual preempts to show good suits.

A 1♠ fert is not for the timid or nervous. Clearly it's unsound to open 1♠ with the following, 2nd in hand:

♠ 10 5 ♥ Q 7 5 4 2 ♦ 7 6 4 ♣ 9 4 2

This could turn ugly. You'll concede the odd 1100 but not often. Opponents who hunt for penalties can wind up with nasty foot injuries.

Besides, our unusual methods are sure to generate a few undeserved swings, so it's only fair to give them the occasional free hit in return. (Nevertheless, it is prudent to switch to Scamp when vulnerable)

Responding to 1♠

1♠	No	up to around 13
	1NT	15-19 semi-balanced, a bit less with short spades
	2♣+	19+ any, Benjamin-style
	2♦/♥/♠	natural, nominally 10-18 pts like an overcall
	2NT	20-21 balanced
	3♣	wanted to bid 2♣
	3♦+	preemptive

It's also good to pass on some decent hands with spade length. If you bid a suit, they get their takeout doubles and cue bids. Passing leaves them to guess and grope. They will tend to overbid because your pass sounds weak. If you back in, partner will pick you for some spades.

The 2♣ response shows some Acol two or better, or 22+ balanced. Over this, opener bids 2♦ on most hands, then 2♥ is an artificial game force, while the rest are not forcing, Acol Twos.

The 1NT response could be some 5422, rarely a singleton. This is non-invitational (Niobe²) looking for a better part score. Opener needs a shapely hand to think of game. We use our normal responding style – Stayman, major transfers, 2NT minors.

2 NIOBE – Non-invitational opposite balanced.
A Greek goddess and cocker spaniel.

Other responses to 1♠ show 5+ cards, 10-18 in principle but could be a lot weaker to direct the lead. Be on the lookout for heavy preempts and shaded responses:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♠	No	?	♠ 6 2
			♥ 8 6
			♦ K Q J 9
			♣ J 7 5 4 2

2♦ is the go. They have 26+ points, so set up the defence to their game or slam. This will make it harder for them to judge their assets.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♠	No	?	♠ Q J 10 8 5 4
			♥ 5 2
			♦ A K J 5
			♣ 10

Now that you've sneaked past North, put the pressure on with 3♠.

Opener can raise or reenter on minimal values:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ K J 7 6	1♠	2♦	No	No
♥ J 10 6 5 4	?			
♦ 2				
♣ 10 6 5				

Having shown 0-6, it's fun to double.

The next hand doubles

When they get stuck into your fert, It's important to know when and how to run; to act in tempo and with confidence. This is a game of bluff and guess, so be a good poker player and be prepared.

Responder's actions will vary with the meaning of their double, be it "16+" or "some opening hand" or "spades" or "undiscussed".

Be keen to pass if possible, throwing the heat on the fourth player. The only time he will be happy to pass is when he has a fair hand with long spades.

Let's assume their double shows 16+ any. (Not best)

WEST	NORTH	EAST	
1♠	Dbl	No	spade tolerance
		Rdbl	15+ with a few spades ³
		1NT	short spades, any strength
		2♣+	natural, decent suits

Spade tolerance is ideally three but could be a doubleton and a flat hand. With just two, it's sometimes better to try something else.

1NT shows something approaching 1-4-4-4, could be a good hand. Opener can sit as an offer to play, or start to scramble.

Opener is expected to pass out 1♠x with 4+ spades and usually bid with fewer. This is the scheme:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Dbl	No	No
No	4+ spades		
Rdbl	takeout, 3+ cards in unbids; or red suits		
1NT	natural, fair hand; or clubs & a red suit		
2♣/♦/♥	to play		

When they catch us, we need to be able to find our best spot at the 2-level. Here are some tips:

- Don't run to soon.
- 1NT – even 2♠ – could be options.
- When showing a 2-suiter, a redouble says that the **higher ranking** suit is longer. For instance:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST	EAST'S HAND
			1♠	♠ 6 5 2
Dbl	No	No	RDbl	♥ J 9 8 4 3
No	2♣	Dbl	?	♦ A 10 6 2
				♣ 8

East might have passed out 1♠x. (How quickly did North pass?) Having run, a second redouble shows this – red suits with longer hearts. With 4-5, just bid 2♦ if or when partner's 2♣ gets doubled.

Some hands with clubs can bid 1NT then redouble to show clubs and a red suit.

3 There is a case for redouble as rescue. Then 1NT can be something fancy.

Playing 1NTx

Conventional wisdom says that 1NT is a bad spot to play when your side is outgunned. We're not so sure. Why scramble for a higher contract with the added risk of ruffs? While it's no fun to watch the opening leader reel off a solid 7-card suit, 1NTx is sometimes your best spot.

1NT immediately over a double by the fourth player is takeout, the usual clubs and a red suit:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ 7 6	1♠	No	No	Dbl
♥ 5 4	?			
♦ Q 8 6 3 2				
♣ Q J 9 2				

Pass is tempting. You look a turkey if you bid and get carved up, only to discover that North was bidding.

If you decide to act, 1NT shows something like this. You plan to redouble 1NT to show longer diamonds. (Hands with five hearts would prefer to redouble first time, not go via 1NT) 2♣ would show 5+ with four of a red suit.

Swords have two edges ⁴

Be philosophical when they nail you. A 1♠ fert is guaranteed to deliver a 12 IMP disaster one day, -1400 against their 660. People shudder at this, as if they've never seen a 12 IMP swing.

These rare disasters will be more than compensated by their misadventures on everyday hands. By preempting one major and bidding the other, you force them to grope around at the 2-level, using unfamiliar methods. They will often misjudge their combined assets, particularly if responder makes use of his licence to jump about.

How should they defend? One thought is to double 1♠ with 16+ and bid naturally with 12-15, Precision-style. Already they have been forced to ditch their cherished system with all its subtle nuances.

The courtesy car doesn't handle too well either. If double is any 16+, fourth hand needs some values and long spades to pass out 1♠x, so they'll rarely catch you.

4 If your "sword" has one cutting edge, it's probably a sabre.

This illustrates the problem:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	SOUTH'S HAND
1♠ ⁰⁻⁷	Dbl ¹⁶⁺	No	?	♠ K 10 6 4
				♥ K 6 5 4
				♦ Q 8 5
				♣ J 7

At nil vul, South should take his chances against 1♠x. Yes, partner might be 1-6-3-3 so you could be trading +420 for -160. Teammates will have to live with these rare mishaps.

Players don't like to pass here because they hate to make an early decision on the fate of a hand.

Fourth hand also needs some way to show 0-7, with 1NT the unattractive prime candidate. (2♣ might be better) The 12-15 openings should travel okay, though some major fits will slip by.

A better defence

Let's switch seats. Their ferrets will sometimes deflect us from our best contract, so we need to nail the ferret occasionally to claw back lost IMPs.

A good method is to double 1♠ with 14+ semi-balanced, which allows partner to pass for penalty with four spades – sometimes three – and scattered values. Failing that, responder's 1NT is to play, 2♣ is a range enquiry, 2♦ and 2♥ are transfers. Like responding to a wide-range 1NT opening.

Bids over 1♠ are **transfers**. This method works well so please keep it under your hat.

1♣ opening (7-12 with hearts)

Why 7-12? Adding the 7-counts increases the frequency of descriptive openings to a whopping 53% of dealt hands, though we prefer 1♠ with square or dull 7-counts. You might follow a Rule of 15 Opening Points:

♠ 9 8 ♥ K 10 9 5 ♦ K J 8 5 4 ♣ 6 3

16 Opening Points, 4 SPs & good hearts so 1♣ is fine.

The 6-point range looks unwieldy but there is space for two relays, which allows pinpoint invitational sequences.

There is no denied major but there are compensating gains. We get the range probe, responder will declare heart contracts and can happily show spades, a problem area for Scamp. These are the responses:

1♣	No	Most 0-8 counts
1♦		range probe
1♥		strong relay, 16 +
1♠		natural, usually 5+, 8-14 in principle
1NT		8-12 balanced (but prefer 1♦ with 4♠s)
2♣/♦		natural (5+), 7-12 in principle
2♥		8-12 TP, 3-4 trumps (bid 1♦ with 8-9 & 3 trumps)
2♠		fit-showing, 5-3 majors, 13-15 pts
2NT		good limit+ raise
3♣/♦		invitational

Explain the range probe as “13-15 any, or some weaker hands with no clear action”. Not too weak – not a flat 6-count. (1♣ : 1♦ : 1NT on a combined 16-count will not be fun)

Over the range probe, opener’s 1♥ shows any minimum, 1♠ shows spades and a max, often unbalanced. 2♠ would be 6-4.

Feel free to shade – or even psyche – the constructive responses.

Light opening systems can be lethal on hands that belong to the other side:

W/Nil		♠ Q 10 3	
		♥ K 10 8 6	
		♦ A 6	
		♣ Q 8 7 4	
♠ A 7 4			♠ 8 6 5
♥ J 9 7 4			♥ 5
♦ J 8 4			♦ K Q 10 5 3 2
♣ A 6 5			♣ 10 9 3
		♠ K J 9 2	
		♥ A Q 3 2	
		♦ 9 7	
		♣ K J 2	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣ ^{hearts}	No	2♦	Dbl
No	2NT	End	

One off with 4♥ cold. By opening bad suits in bad hands, we put pressure on their takeout double. South felt the strain but passed the first test.

North thought 2NT might have been Lebensohl. Afterwards, he said that they needed to keep a weather eye on our shown major, that 2♥ should be natural, not a cue bid. Another concession ...

Light opening systems offer new ways to gain IMPs. As here, you can direct the lead with impunity, steal their suit or the whole pot.

The other gains come when they brush aside your feeble-sounding openings and sail into game on a flat, combined 22-count. If we move a key honour to East and North-South choose the wrong time to be aggressive, a spec double by East will yield +500.

To be honest, this sort of systemic gain is rare.

What we **have** observed is opponents making more errors than usual on everyday hands.

Relay Adjustments

The relay structure needs a small addition to describe the hands with both majors:

1♥ ^R	1♣	<i>hearts</i>
	1♠	& spades
	1NT	& diamonds
	2♣	balanced, not 4 spades

When opener shows spades:

1♥ ^R 1NT ^R	1♣	
	1♠	<i>spades</i>
	2♣	flat (2 hands)
	2♦	Roman
	2♥	canapé (longer hearts, the lower-ranking suit)

The 1♦ opening – spades, not hearts, 7-12 pts – is the same as in Scamp, with the responses beefed up.

If second hand doubles 1♣ or bids 1♦ over 1♣, the two relays are still available. Anything higher and we revert to natural.

1♥ (7-12, no major)

It could be expensive to open 1NT with these hands. The lower start offers some safety and gives responder room to check on strength as well as shape, via the *range relay*. These are the responses:

1♥	No	weak, or fair with hearts
	1♠	range-relay
	1NT	to play
	2 any	to play, about 7-12 pts
	2NT	minors ⁵
	3♣+	preemptive

Over the range-relay, opener bids 1NT with any minimum. Maximums zoom into shape-showing as expected:

	1♥	
1♠ ^{RR}	1NT	7-9 balanced
	2♣	max, 5 diamonds
	2♦	max, 5 clubs
	etc	

As per Scamp, though Down One. Over 1NT, responder can restart relay with 2♣, dropping Squarely into the Scamp structure.

In competition

If the next player doubles, pass is to play, usually with 4+ hearts. Redouble is the range-relay and others are natural. Responder will sometimes have to bid a 4-card minor here, so opener needs four trumps to raise.

A cheap trick is to bid 1♠ with something like 2-3-4-4, planning to redouble if they smoke you out. Note that 1♠ is *systemically* “natural, not forcing; occasionally a weak hand short in spades.”

In fact, **any** bid in a major denied by opener should be explained that way. (At least when we do it!) Don’t let them use the Ps word.

If the next hand bids 1♠, double is takeout. If they overcall at the 2-level, double over the length is penalty; we play Rubensohl suit transfers after a major overcall. 2NT is a natural invite.

5 To avoid wrong-siding after 1♥-1♠-1NT, we throw balanced slam tries in here.

1NT (5+ diamonds, 7-12 pts)

Like the Scamp 2♦ opening. That is, six diamonds or both minors with longer diamonds. The obvious downside is that opener will declare 3NT.

Again the lower start leaves room for a range-relay:

1NT	2♣	range-relay, good 13+
	2♦	to play
	2♥/♠	natural, mildly constructive
	2NT	good raise to 3♦
	3♣/♥/♠	invitational
	3♦	preemptive

Responder can relay on quite moderate hands, planning to pass 2♦. (In Scamp, relaying over 2♣ or 2♦ usually lands you in game) The structure is as expected:

	1NT	
2♣ ^{RR}	2♦	all minimums
	2♥	max, 4 clubs as well
	2♠	max, 1-suiter, high shortage, etc

Over the minimum, responder can restart relay with 2♥.

2♣ (7-11 with 5+ clubs)

This is like the Scamp 2♣ opening. There's no room for a range-relay so we cut the range back a little. With a 12-count, opener can think of opening 1♥, or maybe passing to show 13+. (But Pass : 1♦ : 2♣ is not natural. See next)

The Strong Pass

Strong pass systems are such fun – either you open the bidding or you have a good hand.

These are the basic responses, repeated from last chapter:

Pass	1♣	(6)7-10 any
	1♦	0-6 any
	1♥	spades, not flat, 11+
	1♠	hearts, 11+
	1NT	diamonds, 11+, etc

6-counts go either way.

Over the 1♦ negative, it's all natural except that passer can bid 2♣ to force, like a Standard 2♣ opening:

	<i>Pass</i>	
1♦	1♥/♠	natural, 13-20
	1NT	13-19, no major if minimum
	2♣	like a strong 2♣, 20+
	2♥/♠	Acol twos, not forcing
	2NT	20-21

Over 1♣, the semi-positive, the passer can relay with 16+, dropping into *compressed* shape-showing. Others show 13-16 counts:

	<i>Pass</i>	
1♣	1♦	good 16+
	1♥/♠	13-16 4+ suits, sometimes flat
	1NT	13-16 balanced, generally no major if minimum
	2♣/♦	usually 6-carders
	2♥	majors , 5-5
	2♠	spades & a minor, 5-5
	2NT	minors
	3♣/♦	2-suiters with hearts

This is a comfortable structure, better than the equivalent one in Scamp because opener can show hearts at the 1-level and 1NT need never be off-shape. With 16-17 pts, opener relays once then breaks the chain, F2NPR.

After a raise to 2♥ or 2♠, opener can bid the step (2♠/2NT) as the start of a short suit trial, just as in Scamp. 2NT by opener over a raise to 2♥ shows a long suit trial in spades.⁶

The non-forcing sequences are a bit crude. Responder's lack of a force can be awkward:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
<i>Pass</i>	1♣	♠ A 6 2
1♠	?	♥ K Q 10 5 3
		♦ J 10 3
		♣ 9 4

A bit strong for 2♠ but what else is there? Maybe 3♥?

6 Similarly, 1♣ : 2♥ : 2NT shows spades

A thought is to use 2♣ over opener's major rebid as a kind of *Drury*, typically a good 3-card raise. We **don't** but you might.

In Competition

PODI applies if they overcall through 1♦:

Pass	(1♣/♦)	No	0-6 any
		Dbl	6-10 any, no more relays ⁷

Opener can start relay if responder bids 1♣ and the next hand doubles or overcalls 1♦. If the overcall is 1♥ or higher, it's all off.

We play *Suit Rubensohl* after a major overcall:

Pass	(1♥)	No	0-6 or hearts
		Dbl	takeout, not a 1-suiter
		1♠	usually 5+ spades, forcing
		1NT	6-8 balanced with a stopper
		2♣/♥/♠	transfers to ♦/♠/♣
		2♦	stopper ask
		2NT	natural invite (compare Scamp)
		3♣+	game-forcing 1-suiters (6+)

Slam Points

The range-relay affects Slam Points in a minor way.

	SPs	Ks
11+	7+	3+
6-10	4+ (4-7)	1+
7-12	4+ (4-8)	2+
(10-12)	6+ (6-8)	2+

(10-12 only for a maximum 1♥/1NT opening)

The 7-12 range causes a few problems, because opener might have 8 SPs. (A-A-K)

When zooming to 3NT, tack the rare 8 SP hands at the end. In other words, if the bids available are 3♠ and 3NT, 3♠ = 4-5 SPs, 3NT = 6-7(8) SPs.

⁷ Except that 1♦ is relay after Pass (1♣) X (No)

A relay alternative

There is another way to respond to Pass – have responder show shape straight away with 6-10 counts:

Pass	1♣	0-6 any
	1♦	11+ any
	1♥	4+ <u>spades</u> , (6)7-10 pts
	1♠	4+ hearts, denies 4 spades, (6)7-10
	1NT	7-10 balanced, no major
	2♣	6+ clubs (or 5 clubs & 4 diamonds) 7-10 pts
	2♦	6+ diamonds (or 5 diamonds & 4 clubs)
	2♥+	preemptive

The 1♣ negative is clearly better than our 1♦, since opener can show clubs with 2♣ and relay with 1♦. (1♥ as a second negative, then 2♣ forces to game)

It's also fine for the 13+ opener to show shape, rather than the 11+ responder. Sure, fourth hand can preempt but the game force gives us extra options. Slam Points start at 8, Controls at 4.

With other responses showing shape and 6-10 points, opener is well-placed to cope with intervention and some natural auctions will flow better.

The cost is in complexity and lost steps. Also, modest tinkering like this increases the divergence from Scamp, a major consideration if you switch systems from board to board, as we do.

Is the change worth it? The original method is fine given a free run, but you can lose major fits to active opponents. This happened to us recently, playing the original method:

♠ A10 4 2		♠ K J 8 7	
♥ 8 7		♥ A10 6	
♦ A 8 5 4		♦ 7	
♣ K Q 7		♣ J 9 8 6 3	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	No	1♣ ⁶⁻¹⁰	3♥
No	No	No	

Each might have stretched to act over South's 3♥ but both got cold feet. Much easier if East can show spades straight away.

A few hands like this encouraged us to trial the change, despite reservations. There are problem hands:

♠ 4 2	♠ A 10 6 3
♥ A 9 7 3 2	♥ K 10 8 4
♦ A K 5	♦ 7 3
♣ Q 10 8	♣ 9 6 3

Simple with the original style. If we get East to describe straight away with 6-10 counts, the auction is a little awkward:

Pass	1♥	4+ spades, (6)7-10 pts
1NT	No	

It's less than impressive to miss that heart fit. A workaround is for opener's 2♣ to be Aspro. (Say we move the ♠2 to diamonds)

There are clear gains from finding major fits quickly. Against that, steps are lost when opener relays over 1♥ or 1♠:

Pass	1♥	4+ spades, 6-10 pts
1♠ ¹⁷⁺	1NT	& hearts ⁸
	2♣	& diamonds
	2♦	balanced (without four hearts)
	2♥	& clubs, 5+ hearts
		etc, <u>Up One</u>

After a 1♠ response, it looks better to relay with 2♣, which pushes the structure Up Two. Losing steps is less of an issue when describer's high card strength is tightly limited.

This is the revised strength table:

	SPs	Ks
13+	8+	4+
4-6	2+ (2-4)	0+
6-10	4+ (4-7)	1+
7-12	4+ (4-8)	2+
(10-12)	6+ (6-8)	2+

It's probably worth the memory strain.

8 Then 2♦ = bal, 2♥ = Roman, 2♠ = longer hearts. Maintains Up One.

Directing the defence

W/Nil		♠ A Q	
		♥ Q 9 7	
		♦ 10 7 5 2	
		♣ A 10 7 3	
♠ K 10 5 3 2			♠ J 9 6 4
♥ 6 5			♥ A 10 8 3 2
♦ Q 8 6 3			♦ 9 4
♣ K 8			♣ Q 9
		♠ 8 7	
		♥ K J 4	
		♦ A K J	
		♣ J 6 5 4 2	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦ ♠, 7-12	No	2♠	Dbl
No	3NT	End	

Eight tricks on the spade lead. At the other table, North's weak notrump opening was raised to game for 10 tricks on a heart lead.

A swing from thin air

N/EW		♠ Q 8 3	
		♥ Q 10 6 2	
		♦ K 8	
		♣ Q 9 8 3	
♠ J 10 4 2			♠ K 7 6
♥ 7 4 3			♥ A J 9
♦ 10 9 2			♦ A J 7 6 3
♣ 10 6 4			♣ K 7
		♠ A 9 5	
		♥ K 8 5	
		♦ Q 5 4	
		♣ A J 5 2	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣ ♥, 7-12	1NT	Dbl
End			

At the other table, East's strong notrump opening was passed out. That declarer managed five tricks on a club lead. In our room, South made a marginal double and led partner's suit with trepidation. However, this proved a good start and declarer was held to four tricks for a lazy +800 and 12 IMPs.

Nailed

This has happened rarely. From a recent national final:

N/Nil	♠ 9 7 6		
	♥ 8 7 6 3 2		
	♦ Q 9 7 5		
	♣ 4		
♠ Q 4		♠ K 10 5 3 2	
♥ A K Q J		♥ 5 4	
♦ A 10 4 3		♦ K J	
♣ K 9 3		♣ A 10 7 6	
	♠ A J 8		
	♥ 10 9		
	♦ 8 6 2		
	♣ Q J 8 5 2		

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠ ⁰⁻⁷	No	No
Dbf	No	No	No!

An easy way to win 12 IMPs. In fact, South did well to pass out 1♠x. Anything higher is even worse. East correctly led a trump, which stopped the club ruff so we were -1100. Oh well.

Note that a lower fert would not have helped this time – anything goes for at least 1100.

Why show this bad system hand? Apart from enabling a lame claim to integrity, it's in the long term interest of ferters to reveal the best defensive strategy.

Despite hands like this, our 1♠ opener has been a big earner.

At the moment, ferters have an unfair advantage since all opponents are ill-prepared and inexperienced. We prosper because we understand these auctions and they don't.

Flushed with success, they tried again a few boards later:

Roulette

W/Nil	♠ J 7 5 3		
	♥ 7 5 4 2		
	♦ A 10		
	♣ 10 6 5		
♠ Q 10 9 2		♠ A	
♥ K J		♥ A 3	
♦ K 8 6 4 2		♦ J 9 7	
♣ 9 2		♣ K Q J 8 7 4 3	
	♠ K 8 6 4		
	♥ Q 10 9 8 6		
	♦ Q 5 3		
	♣ A		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
No	1♠ ⁰⁻⁷	Dbl ¹⁶⁺	No
No	No		

+260 this time, when they make 3NT. A better defence is to double with 14+ balanced and use transfer overcalls on hands like the East one. (Without that agreement, East should probably have bid 3♣ anyway) Our turn to score 12 IMPs.

Hard to match

♠ A J 2	♠ 8	
♥ K 9 7	♥ A 10 4	
♦ K J 9 3	♦ A Q 6 5	
♣ Q 6 4	♣ A K 10 5 2	
Pass ¹³⁺	1NT	diamonds, 11+
2♣ ^R	2♥	& clubs, canapé
2♠ ^R	2NT	high shortage
3♣ ^R	3♦	1-3-4-5
3♥ ^{SPs}	4♠	12 SPs “base +4 is a raise”
4NT ^{DCB}	5♣	♣ - 0 or 2
5♦ ^{DCB}	5♥	♦ - 0 or 2
5♠ ^{DCB}	6♦	♥ - yes, ♠ - no, ♣ - no 3rd
7♦	No	

West has useful honours but a dull shape so it would have been reasonable to sign off in 3NT over 3♦. East would resurrect (with 4♦ = 12 SPs) and they'd still reach 7♦.

Follow the blind leader

W/Nil	♠ Q 10 4 3	
	♥ 7	
	♦ Q 10 8 6 2	
	♣ 9 6 2	
♠ A 8 7 2		♠ J 6 5
♥ J 9 3		♥ A K 8 5
♦ 9 3		♦ A 4
♣ K Q 7 4		♣ A 10 5 3
	♠ K 9	
	♥ Q 10 6 4 2	
	♦ K J 7 5	
	♣ J 8	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦ ^{♠, 7-12}	No	1♠ ^R	No
2♣ ^{bal}	No	2NT	No
3NT	End		

South led a heart, leading to a quick claim. In a recent Butler event most Easts in 3NT got a diamond lead for -50. After East opened a strong notrump, Stayman made it easier for South.

Preempting at the 1-level

N/Nil	♠ 7	
	♥ J 10 5 2	
	♦ Q 9 2	
	♣ K J 9 7 5	
♠ K Q J 9 3		♠ A 10 8 5 4 2
♥ 8 7 6		♥ K Q 4
♦ J 7		♦ 10
♣ 10 6 4		♣ A Q 8
	♠ 6	
	♥ A 9 3	
	♦ A K 8 6 5 4 3	
	♣ 3 2	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠ ⁰⁻⁷	Dbl ¹⁶⁺	3♦
3♠	4♣!	4NT	No
5♣	No	5♠	End

1♠ forced East to delay showing his suit, while 3♦ prompted an overbid. Unfortunately, they don't make 4♠ so the gain was modest.

Bidding their suit

W/Both	♠ AK J 10 9 4 3		
	♥ K 10 9 4		
	♦ —		
	♣ 10 9		
♠ Q 8 7 5		♠ 6 2	
♥ A J 3		♥ Q 6 5	
♦ 7 6 4 3		♦ AK Q J 10 9 2	
♣ K 2		♣ 4	
	♠ —		
	♥ 8 7 2		
	♦ 8 5		
	♣ A Q J 8 7 6 5 3		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	4♠	End	

One off with 5♣ making. Crude by North but he was given a novel problem. Their defence included 1♠ for takeout – not best.

Another relay hand to finish

♠ J 7	♠ A 5	
♥ A Q	♥ K 10 5	
♦ AK 10 8 6 5	♦ 7 4 3 2	
♣ K 6 4	♣ A 8 7 5	
Pass ¹³⁺	2♦	11+ bal, no major
2♥ ^R	3♣	2-3-4-4
3♦ ^{SPs}	3♠	8 SPs
4♣ ^{DCB}	4♦	♦ - 0 or 2
4♥ ^{DCB}	5♦	♣, ♥, ♠ - yes, ♦ - 0
6♦		

Everyone else played 3NT so we gained 10 IMPs.
For Standard, I quite like 2NT - 4NT - 6♦.

Chapter 18

Arithmetic

Leonardo Fibonacci was the first notable Christian mathematician of medieval Europe. The Fibonacci sequence, which governs the rate of growth of some organisms and populations, is named after him. This is the sequence:

(1), 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144, 233, 377

After a scratchy start, each number is the sum of the previous two. Roy Kerr and Walter Jones used this sequence to devise the structure of symmetric relay. Take this Scamp relay auction:

1♠^R 1♥ 2♣ balanced

Opener can have one of 8 patterns (3 x 5332, 4 x 4432, 1 x 4333). The efficient way to describe these shapes is to split them into streams that all end at the same low point. Fibonacci dictates how this should be done.

(8)	2♣	8 balanced hands		
(3)	2♥	five hearts		
(2)	2♠	♥ & ♦		
(1)	2NT	2-4-3-4		2-5-3-3
(1)	3♣	3-4-2-4	2-4-4-3	3-5-2-3
(1)	3♦	3-4-3-3	3-4-4-2	3-5-3-2

This Fibonacci split (3-2-1-1-1) ensures that all the streams end at 3♦. If we add an extra shape to the eight balanced hands, one stream would overflow to 3♥. The ideal number of hands to place in each box is a Fibonacci number – eight and five are good, four is not ideal.

However, it's logical to deal with some patterns in groups of four. Take Roman hands with a known shortage. There are four of them, which we resolve in one go, rather than make more streams – you need five shapes to make that worthwhile.

hand patterns if we start shape-showing at 1♥. In Scamp, we show 300. We don't use the available space with clinical efficiency.

If we had to start shape-showing at 1♠, some non-freaky shapes would go over the top – 233 is the best you can do.

This has implications for system designers. In Scamp, we open 1♥ on 88 hand patterns, when the Fibonacci maximum is 144. This gives us leeway to use as much symmetry as possible, to avoid memory strain. This wastes some space but allows for early resolution of the common shapes.

Relay alternatives

The relay structures presented in this book are by no means universal. Pairs have constructed different flavours of symmetric.

- Common is to treat all 5332s as 1-suiters. We don't because we want to avoid 1♦/1♥ : 1♠ : 2♠+ with those balanced hands.

- Responding to 1♣

Scamp splits the balanced hands into two groups.

Here's a different structure from Mark Abraham of Sweden:

1♣	1♥	spades, not flat
	1♠	flat or reds
	1NT	hearts, 1-suiter or clubs as well
	2♣	diamonds, could be Roman both minors
	2♦	1-suited clubs, 5+
	2♥+	minors, 2♥ = canapé

- High or Low shortage first? Canapé or "Enhancer"?

Some pairs show **low** shortage first, though that seems inferior:

WEST'S HAND	WEST	EAST	
♠ A K 10 6	1♣	1♦	
♥ K 10 8 4 3	1♥ ¹⁹⁺	3♣	6+♠s, HS
♦ A K Q	3♦ ^R	3♥	2-2-3-6 / 2-3-2-6
♣ Q	?		

Opener can ask with 3♠, planning to sit 3NT opposite the first shape and reach 4♥ opposite the second. (Hi - low)

Also, relayer is more likely to want to break opposite high shortage.

Some pairs use 2♥ to say that the **first** suit is longer, though it's the canapé hands that need space for a switch to natural, in order to check out stoppers and other strains.

Relay Precision

If your partner is wedded to 5-card majors – and/or 1♦ to show spades is currently illegal where you live – you might like to give Precision a whirl. Don't bother with Danielson's 1970s *Relay Precision*, unless your Greek is very good!

Relay Precision has been around for decades in various forms. The original *Kiwi Club* from the late 70s featured 5-card majors.

Until recently, relay systems were muzzled in America. This is from the **2015** ACBL General and Chart:

Disallowed: Relay (tell me more) systems

However, the ACBL's definition of a relay system was quaint:

*Definitions: A sequence of relay bids is defined as system if, after an opening bid of **one-of-a-suit**, it is started **prior to opener's rebid**.*

So 1NT and higher were exempt, as was a strong 1♣, since opener did the asking. Pairs were thus entitled to use about half a relay system. This changed in 2018. Now it's legal to relay over all opening bids in most American events.

The full Scamp structure over 1♣ is fine. How about 1NT?

Modern Precision pairs like to split the balanced hands between two openings – 1♦ & 1NT. Common is 1NT as 14-16, opening 1♦ with 11-13 balanced, as well as the unbalanced diamond hands.

Simplest is to go with traditional Precision two bids:

1♣	16+ any (17+ if balanced)	
1♦	11-13 bal; or 11-15 unbal (4+♦s)	2♣ = relay
1♥/♠	5-card suits	2♣ = relay
1NT	14-16 balanced, 5cM okay	2♣ = relay Stayman
2♣	6+♣s, or 5♣s & a 4-card Major	2♦ = relay
2♦	3-suited, short diamonds	2NT asks

There are other choices. Equally sensible is to remove 4-card majors from 2♣. Also to discard the rare 2♦ opening, perhaps replacing it with a Multi.

That's fine, though it becomes difficult to design a relay structure over the expanded 1♦ opening, which would have to house the club raptors², plus most of the 3-suiters. Could be a void.

² Raptor - a hand with a 4-card major plus a longer minor

Try this over the 14-16 notrump, which could have a 5-card major:

1NT	2♣	Relay Stayman
	2♦♥	major transfers
	2♠	raise to 2NT; or 6+ clubs
	2NT	6+ diamonds
	3♣	Puppet Stayman
	3♦+	various minor 2-suiters

This is the modern Australian suite of responses. 2♠ as a raise ensures that invitational Stayman hands will always have a 4-card major. 3♣ as Puppet isn't strictly necessary but it avoids giving away information and shuts out the fourth player.

Here is a possible relay structure:

1NT	2♣ ^R			
2♦	no major			
2♥	4 or 5 hearts			
2♠	4 spades			
2NT	5 spades, min		5 hearts	5 diamonds
3♣	5-2-3-3, max		♥ & ♠	5 clubs
3♦	5-3-2-3, "	♠ & ♦	♥ & ♦	2-3-4-4
3♥	5-3-3-2, "	4-2-3-4	2-4-3-4	3-2-4-4
3♠		4-3-2-4	3-4-2-4	3-3-4-3
3NT		4-3-3-3	3-4-3-3	3-3-3-4

- 2♣ functions as invitational (& promissory) Stayman.
- 2♥ over 2♦ is Garbage; 2♠ is the relay, dropping into the Scamp No Major structure, one step up.
- Stayman then 2NT should be invitational, so 3♣ is the relay after 2♠ by opener.

Relay Stayman unravels all shapes, allowing subsequent strength asks and DCB. SPs start at 8, Controls at 4.

Also, since strong hands go via 2♣, sequences like transfer then a new suit can be invitational if you wish. Or you might try Gladiator.

There's not much to learn for Scampers. The heart hands follow our relay principles – 5-carders; 44s resolving the club hands; 4333 at the end. Spade hands are similar but we hivel off and split the 5-carders to allow responder to rest in 2NT opposite a minimum with five spades.

Major openings in Precision

Balanced 14-16 counts with a 5-card major can open 1NT, so balanced major openings will be 11-13.

Some choose to relay with 1NT, though that creates problems:

WEST	EAST	EAST'S HAND
1♠	?	♠ 8
		♥ K 10 6 5
		♦ A 7 3 2
		♣ Q 8 4 2

If 1NT is relay, I guess you bid 2♣ non-forcing with this. It's easy to see that turning out badly. Prefer the 1NT response to be natural-ish and semi-forcing, so responder uses 2♣ to unravel shape.

Compared to Scamp, you start two steps higher, which can't be good. To compensate, there are no flat or canapé hands to worry about, which save steps. Against that, there is no denied major.

If you are greedy, you can throw other hands into 2♣, such as invitational with clubs; maybe 3-card limit raise. To cater for those, opener zooms to 2NT+ with clubs:

	1♥/♠	
2♣ ^R	2♦	balanced; or other major
	2♥	& diamonds
	2♠	1-suiter (6+)
	2NT	& clubs, 5-5
	3♣	& clubs, HS
	3♦	5-2-2-4, etc

The 1-suiters are Up Two (yuk) and 2-suiters are Up One.

	1♠	
2♣ ^R	2♦	balanced or hearts
2♥ ^R	2♠	balanced
	2NT	& hearts, 5-5

Of course you note that 5-5 majors always opens 1♠. You save that step after a 1♥ opening, so 4-5 majors are Square.

The Roman hands (5440s) are a bit awkward. Slot them in after the appropriate 5431, shunting and compressing the other shapes.

If all this offends, relay with 1NT instead and get used to passing 1M on those balanced-ish 6-9 counts with no fit.

Relays over a Precision 1♦

If you stick with the traditional Precision 2♣ and 2♦ openings, you are left with the following for the "catch all" 1♦:

- 11-13 balanced, so 2+♦s
- 1-suited diamonds (6+)
- both minors, 5-4 either way
- 5+♦s and a 4-card Major (Raptor)
- pure 3-suited (three of the 4441s)

Responder **could** relay with 1NT, giving up on 6-10 no Major.

(Bid 1♥ or 1♠ on a 3-card suit with those hands)

Some use 1♥ as "hearts or a relay".

More usual is to relay with 2♣, though the structure is predictably strained and asymmetric. There is a strong case for this relay to be virtually game-forcing, because most invitational hands can do something else – 1♥/♠ (forcing) or 2NT invite if no major.

Try this:

	1♦	2+♦s, <i>catch-all</i>
2♣ ^R	2♦	11-13 balanced
	2♥	5+♦s & a 4-card major (Raptor)
	2♠	& clubs, 5+♦s
	2NT	& clubs, canapé
	3♣	6+♦s, HS
	3♦	6+♦s, MS
		etc (Up Two)

The balanced and diamond Raptor hands have pushed the whole structure Up Two Steps. A pain but manageable.

Need to fudge a bit with the 2-suiters:

...	2♥	<i>Raptor</i>
2♠ ^R	2NT	5+♦s & 4♠s
	3♣	4441s, 3 shapes (show the shortage) ³
	3♦	5+♦s & 4♥s, HS
	3♥	2-4-5-2
	3♠	3-4-5-1
	3NT	2-4-6-1 / 3-4-6-0

Balanced hands follow the Scamp pattern, pushed up a bit:

	1♦	2+♦s	
2♣ ^R	2♦	11-13 balanced	
2♥ ^R	2♠	no 4-card Major	↓
	2NT	spades & a minor	5♦s
	3♣	hearts & a minor	5♣s
	3♦	4-4-2-3	2-3-4-4
	3♥	4-4-3-2	3-2-4-4
	3♠	4-3-3-3	3-3-4+3
	3NT	3-4-3-3	

That is a bit tight, bunching a few shapes at 3NT. (Don't split those)
Opener might even have something like

♠ A Q J 5 ♥ 10 5 ♦ A 3 ♣ J 7 5 4 3

preferring 1♦ to 2♣, then distorting to show 4-2-3-4.

Natural auctions will flow better opposite "balanced or diamonds".
New suit rebids by opener show unbalanced hands; 1NT is 11-13;
2♣ is 5-4 either way; jumps show shapely hands.

Over a Precision 2♣

Don't like throwing 4-card majors in here but there isn't enough room in 1♦ to accommodate and describe these club raptors.

2♦ asks, over which 2NT+ show the 1-suiters, Up One. After opener shows a major over 2♦ (maybe 2♥ = ♠ for right-siding?) simplest is to use 2NT as the shape ask over both of them, Up One.

Over 2♦

Traditionally this showed 4-4-1-4 or 4-4-0-5. You would get about two per year. Normal is to add 4-3-1-5 and 3-4-1-5 if you feel like it, typically when the clubs are too shabby to open 2♣.

2NT relays, over which the approved order is 4-3, 3-4, 4-4.

These two openings aren't great but the 1♦ opening will thank you.

I'm sure you can do better. Have a go!

The issue is the differing shapes for the various openings, making symmetry and memorability more difficult to achieve. Too tough for me anyway.

This is not a book on Relay Precision. Go google.

Combination Theory

Relay attracts actuaries but all you need is a basic understanding of probability theory. When you can't be certain about partner's honours, go with the odds.

Occasionally you won't have room to nail down partner's holding in a critical suit. This can happen when describer has shown one honour in a shortish suit.

♠ K Q J 4	♠ A 7
♥ J 4	♥ A 7 2 (or ♥ K Q 2)
♦ K Q J	♦ A 10 5 3 2
♣ A 5 3 2	♣ K Q 8
1♣	2♦ balanced, no major
2♥ ^R	2♠ 5 diamonds
2NT ^R	3♣ 2-3-5-3
3NT	4♠ 12 SPs
4NT ^R	5NT ♦, ♥, ♣, ♠ - yes
?	

5NT is as far as East can go and there are no more relays, so you have a guess. Anyway, partner must have 3 SPs in each suit, which means ♠A, ♥A or KQ, ♦A, ♣KQ.

You'll have to decide whether you can bear reading the next Daily Bulletin: *"The Australians had a slow relay auction to 7NT with an ace out ..."*

Assuming you have understanding team-mates, you might bid 7NT anyway because ♥A-x-x is much more likely than ♥K-Q-x.

If partner has ♥K-Q-x, the x is 1 of 8 unknown heart pips. If he has A-x-x, he has 2 from those same 8 pips. This is where combination theory points the way. How many ways can you choose 2 pips from 8? This is the formula: $\frac{n!}{k!(n-k)!}$. In this case it's $\frac{8!}{2!(8-2)!} = 28$.

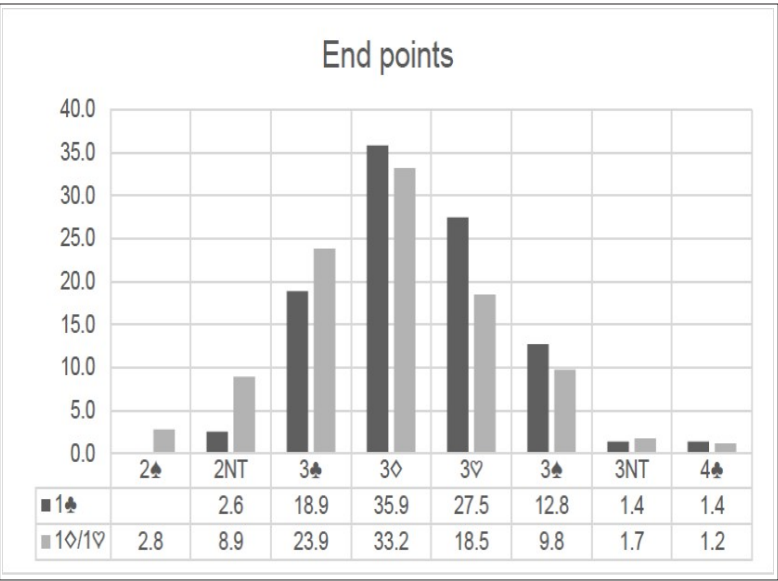
So there are 28 ways to be dealt A-x-x, compared to eight K-Q-x's. This means that ♥A-x-x is 3½ times as likely as ♥K-Q-x, making the grand 78%. Add a bit for North not having the ♥A and leading something else, when you will make whenever South has 3+ clubs. Explain all that to the editors.

Mostly you will be able to resolve this, either by asking for a second heart honour or choosing to ask for Kontrols instead.

Or just agree to relay at the 6-level, as some (most?) pairs do.

Where does it all end?

The graph shows the end points for positive responses to 1♣ and shape-showing over 1♦/♥ openings.



*The shape-showing end points. The y-axis is % of hands.
3♦ is comfortable; 3♥ a bit less so; 3♠ not good.*

For 1♦ & 1♥ openings, 79% of shapes come out by 3♦.

For positives to 1♣, it's 54%.

With semi-positives to 1♣, those dark columns are shifted two to the right, compacting at the threshold of 3NT, or 4♣ if shapely. As noted, it's not good to have describer's 5431 or 6331 come out at 3♠.

Points & Slam Points

There is a close correlation between HCPs and SPs.

To construct the following table, I generated 10,000 hands of each type, with partner having enough to relay – 11+. Then Paul Heitner's old BGen counted the number of SPs.

	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Scamp 1♥ 11-15	-	0	3	19	34	26	14	4	0
Scamp 2♣ 10-14	-	1	8	29	31	21	9	1	-
Scamp 1♦ 10-15	-	1	8	27	30	21	11	3	0
Scamp 1NT 12-15	-	-	-	5	25	38	23	8	1

This is quite accurate. To generate a Scamp 1♥ opening, I included 5-4 10-counts, no 9-counts, excluded shapely 15-counts, though I didn't bother with suit quality tests or deductions for stiff honours.

After a relay by responder, a Scamp 1♥ opener will have 6 SPs 19% of the time. Limit openings with 5 SPs are rare – too rare to start counting SPs at five, more so because opener will sometimes choose not to open with a dull minimum:

♠ J 5 ♥ K Q 6 5 ♦ Q J 5 ♣ Q 10 8 7

This is a pass – aceless 11-count, 5 SPs, ♠Jx – but rare. Most 11-counts are okay. We would open 1♦ with the majors swapped.

Scamp site

The website for the system has links to related methods, software, bridge fonts, system cards and other data files, plus an area for system changes and discussion.

For access, send an email to shevek3@gmail.com

There is an application by Stan Mazur that allows you to practice the method on BBO. It also automatically provides explanations of bids to opponents, to avoid endless typing.

Glossary & Index

1-suiter	6+ in the suit, no second suit. In response to 1♣, 5332s with a Major are treated as 1-suiters
3N forcing	Forcing to 3NT. The auction can die in four of a minor. Applies after two relays
canapé	Showing a shorter suit before the longest
chain break	Switch to natural in a relay auction
core	The suits in a hand with four or more cards
DCB	Denial cue bidding. Artificially showing suits without honours
denied major	Limited openings in Scamp deny 4+ cards in one or both majors
ELC	Equal level conversion Double, then a new suit suggests a 2-suiter
F2NPR	Forcing to 2NT, preference or repeat
flat	4432 or 4333
Honeymoon	Relay system with natural responses
Kontrols	A = 2, K = 1
Moscito	Relay system devised by Paul Marston
NIOBE	Non-invitational opposite balanced
ODR	Offence to Defence Ratio
opening points	HCP + number of cards in the two longest suits
raptor	4-card major plus a longer minor
residue	The short suits in a hand, three cards or fewer
Scamp	Strong Club Accenting Majors
semi-balanced	5422, 6322, 7222, so no singleton
Slam Points	A = 3, K = 2, Q = 1
SNAP	Strong Notrump After Passing
well-defined	Closely defined in strength and shape. Openings of 1NT+ are well-defined
whippet	Half-sized greyhound, second fastest mammal
zooming	Answering the next implied question. Zoom with clubs and low shortage

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All the relay structures

2-suiters (spades & hearts in these examples)

...	2♥	canapé (lower-ranking suit is longer)	
	2♠	55/65	↓
	2NT	high shortage	
	3♣	even	5-4-2-2 HS
	3♦	LS,	5-4-3-1 5-6-1-1 / 6-5-1-1
	3♥		6-4-2-1 LS, 5-5-2-1
	3♠		6-4-3-0 5-5-3-0
	3NT		7-4-1-1 5-6-2-0
	4♣		7-4-2-0 6-5-2-0

1-suiters (spades in these examples)

...	2♠	HS	↓
	2NT	MS	
	3♣	6-3-2-2 / 7-2-2-2	6-2-2-3 / 6-2-3-2
	3♦	LS, 6-3-3-1 *	
	3♥	7-2-3-1	
	3♠	7-3-2-1	
	3NT	7-3-3-0	

* In response to 1♣, 5332 Major hands are 1-suiters. Bid 3♦ with these, shunting shapes up one, concatenating the 7321s.

Roman (e.g. majors)

...	2♦	
2♥ ^R	2♠	diamonds (high suit)
	2NT	4-4-1-4
	3♣	4-4-0-5 (canapé first)
	3♦	4-5-0-4
	3♥	5-4-0-4

Balanced hands after 1♦ (& 1♥)

	1♦	
1♠ ^R	2♣	balanced
2♦ ^R	2♥	5 spades (H/M/L shortage)
	2♠	& diamonds (H/L shortage)
	2NT	4-2-3-4
	3♣	4-3-2-4
	3♦+	4-3-3-3

1♦/♥ Opening – type of hand

1♦/♥	
1♠ ^R	1NT & diamonds
2♣	balanced
2♦	& clubs
2♥	& clubs canapé
2♠+	1-suiter (6+)

1NT opening (1♣ : 2♦ is based on this)

1NT		
2♣ ^R	2♦	5 diamonds
	2♥	5 clubs
	2♠	2-3-4-4 2-3-5-3
	2NT	3-2-4-4 3-2-5-3
	3♣	3-3-4-3 3-3-5-2
	3♦	3-3-3-4 2-2-5-4

1♣ – First Response (compressed structure)

1♣	1♦	0-7 any, some 8-counts
	1♥	4+ spades, not flat, 8+ pts
	1♠	4+ hearts, not spades, not flat
	1NT	4+ diamonds (6+ 1-suiter or 5+4 ⁺ minors)
	2♣	flat with a major
	2♦	balanced, no major
	2♥	Roman, short in a major
	2♠+	club 1-suiter (6+)

1♣ – Type of hand (in example, spades is the anchor suit)

1♣	1♥
1♠ ^R	1NT & hearts, unbalanced
	2♣ & diamonds
	2♦ & clubs, not canapé
	2♥ & clubs canapé
	2♠+ spade 1-suiter (5+)

1♣ – Flat hands with a major (5M332s are 1-suiters)

1♣	2♣		
2♦ ^R	2♥	spades & a minor	
	2♠	hearts & a minor	
	2NT	4-4-2-3	diamonds
	3♣	4-4-3-2	4-2-3-4
	3♦	4-3-3-3	4-3-2-4
	3♥+	3-4-3-3	

	<i>Symmetry in motion – 24 shapes</i>
5-4-1-3	1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ ^R - 1NT - 2♣ ^R - 2NT - 3♣ ^R - 3♦
5-4-3-1	1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ ^R - 1NT - 2♣ ^R - 3♦
4-5-1-3	1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ ^R - 1NT - 2♣ ^R - 2♥ - 2♠ ^R - 2NT - 3♣ ^R - 3♦
4-5-3-1	1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ ^R - 1NT - 2♣ ^R - 2♥ - 2♠ ^R - 3♦
5-1-4-3	1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ ^R - 2♣ - 2♦ ^R - 2NT - 3♣ ^R - 3♦
5-3-4-1	1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ ^R - 2♣ - 2♦ ^R - 3♦
4-1-5-3	1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ ^R - 2♣ - 2♦ ^R - 2♥ - 2♠ ^R - 2NT - 3♣ ^R - 3♦
4-3-5-1	1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ ^R - 2♣ - 2♦ ^R - 2♥ - 2♠ ^R - 3♦
5-1-3-4	1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ ^R - 2♦ - 2♥ ^R - 2NT - 3♣ ^R - 3♦
5-3-1-4	1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ ^R - 2♦ - 2♥ ^R - 3♦
4-1-3-5	1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ ^R - 2♥ - 2♠ ^R - 2NT - 3♣ ^R - 3♦
4-3-1-5	1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ ^R - 2♥ - 2♠ ^R - 3♦
1-5-4-3	1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT ^R - 2♣ - 2♦ ^R - 2NT - 3♣ ^R - 3♦
3-5-4-1	1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT ^R - 2♣ - 2♦ ^R - 3♦
1-4-5-3	1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT ^R - 2♣ - 2♦ ^R - 2♥ - 2♠ ^R - 2NT - 3♣ ^R - 3♦
3-4-5-1	1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT ^R - 2♣ - 2♦ ^R - 2♥ - 2♠ ^R - 3♦
1-5-3-4	1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT ^R - 2♦ - 2♥ ^R - 2NT - 3♣ ^R - 3♦
3-5-1-4	1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT ^R - 2♦ - 2♥ ^R - 3♦
1-4-3-5	1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT ^R - 2♥ - 2♠ ^R - 2NT - 3♣ ^R - 3♦
3-4-1-5	1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT ^R - 2♥ - 2♠ ^R - 3♦
1-3-5-4	1♣ - 1NT - 2♣ ^R - 2♦ - 2♥ ^R - 2NT - 3♣ ^R - 3♦
3-1-5-4	1♣ - 1NT - 2♣ ^R - 2♦ - 2♥ ^R - 3♦
1-3-4-5	1♣ - 1NT - 2♣ ^R - 2♥ - 2♠ ^R - 2NT - 3♣ ^R - 3♦
3-1-4-5	1♣ - 1NT - 2♣ ^R - 2♥ - 2♠ ^R - 3♦

HCP	Slam Points	Kontrols
11-15	6 - 9 (10)	3+
12-15 (1NT)	7 - 10	3+
8+	5+	2+
5-7	3 - 5	1+

RELAY IN ACTION

As bidding sophistication continues to grow, many top pairs are turning to relay systems, where one partner asks questions and then places the final contract based on the answers. Often these methods are tied to a strong club approach: methods such as the Ultimate Club and Moscito have been around for decades. The symmetric relay is an approach that is increasingly popular in Australia; it can be attached to more or less any strong club system.



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