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Bridge Bidding Made Simple · Acol edition



CHAPTER 8

Opening 2NT and Strong Hands

2NT with 20–22, the strong 2♣ opening, and how to respond

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1. Opening 2NT

With a balanced hand too strong for a one-level opening and a no-trump rebid, open **2NT**.

Rule 1. With a balanced hand of **20–22 points**, open **2NT**.

♠ A Q 5
♥ K J 4
♦ A K 6 3
♣ K J 8

21 points, 3-3-4-3: open **2NT**.

2. Responding to 2NT

Partner has 20–22, so with about **4 points** or more you are close to the 25 needed for game. The same tools as over 1NT work one level higher:

Your hand	Bid
0–3 points, balanced	**Pass**
4–10, balanced, no four-card major	**3NT**
A four-card major, 4+ points	**3♣** (Stayman): opener replies 3♦, 3♥ or 3♠
Five or more hearts	**3♦** (transfer to hearts)
Five or more spades	**3♥** (transfer to spades)

After a transfer, continue as over 1NT (Chapter 3): pass with nothing, or bid 3NT with five cards and let opener choose between 3NT and four of your major.

♠ J 7 3 ♥ Q 8 4 ♦ 9 6 5 2 ♣ Q 7 3	Partner opens 2NT. **5 points**: enough for game. Bid **3NT**.

♠ 9 8 4 2 ♥ 7 6 3 ♦ J 5 2 ♣ 10 6 4	Partner opens 2NT. **1 point**: **pass**.

♠ K 10 7 4 ♥ Q 6 2 ♦ J 8 5 ♣ 9 7 3	Partner opens 2NT. **6 points** and four spades: **3♣** (Stayman). Over 3♠ bid 4♠; otherwise 3NT.

♠ 6 4 ♥ J 9 6 5 3 ♦ 8 7 2 ♣ 8 5 4	Partner opens 2NT. Only **1 point**, but five hearts: **3♦**, then **pass** 3♥. Three hearts will often play better than 2NT, although some players simply pass 2NT with so weak a hand.

3. The strongest hands: 2♣

Some hands are so strong that you want to be sure of reaching game even if partner has nothing. For these, Acol uses an **artificial** opening of **2♣**. It says nothing about clubs.

Rule 2. Open **2♣** with:
• a **balanced** hand of **23 or more** points, or
• any hand that can make **game on its own**, or needs only one trick from partner (count your sure tricks: about nine or more).

Partner must not pass. With a weak hand they bid **2♦** (the "negative"). Then you describe your hand:

After 2♣ – 2♦	Shows
2NT	23–24 balanced (partner may pass with nothing)
3NT	25 or more balanced
A suit (2♥, 2♠, 3♣, 3♦)	your long suit; forcing to game

♠ A K Q 6
♥ A K 5
♦ K Q 4
♣ Q 5 3

23 points, balanced: open **2♣**, then rebid 2NT.

♠ A K Q J 10 6 3
♥ A K 4
♦ A 5
♣ 7

21 points, but count your tricks: seven spades, two hearts and the ♦A make **ten**. Game is almost certain on your own: open **2♣**, then bid spades.

Responding to 2♣

Your hand	Bid
Fewer than 8 points	**2♦** (negative)
8+ points and a good five-card suit	**bid your suit** (a positive)
8+ points, balanced	**2NT**

♠ J 7 4
♥ Q 9 3
♦ 8 6 5 2
♣ J 10 4

Partner opens 2♣. **4 points**: **2♦**.

♠ K 5
♥ A Q J 8 4
♦ 9 7 3
♣ 10 6 2

Partner opens 2♣. **10 points** and good hearts: **2♥**, a positive response. Slam is now likely.

What about 2♦, 2♥ and 2♠? In traditional Acol these are "Acol twos": strong hands with a good suit and about eight playing tricks. Many players today use them as **weak twos** instead, and this book follows that modern style (Chapter 9). Agree with your partner which you play.

4. Summary

Your hand	Open
Balanced 20–22	2NT
Balanced 23 or more	2♣, then 2NT (23–24) or 3NT (25+)
Game on your own	2♣, then bid your suit

5. Test yourself

1. ♠ K Q 7
♥ A J 5
♦ A K 8 4
♣ K 9 3

2. ♠ Q 8 5
♥ J 7 4 2
♦ 9 6 3
♣ 10 8 2

3. ♠ K 9 6 3
♥ 8 4
♦ Q 10 7 2
♣ J 6 5

4. ♠ K J 8 6 3
♥ 7 2
♦ Q 5 4
♣ 8 6 3

5. ♠ A K
♥ A K Q 9 7 4
♦ A K 5
♣ 4 3

6. ♠ Q 10 4
♥ J 7 2
♦ 9 6 5 3
♣ Q 8 4

1 and 5: What do you open? 2, 3 and 4: Partner opens 2NT. 6: Partner opens 2♣.

Answers

1. 2NT. 20 points, balanced.

2. Pass. 3 points: not enough for game.

3. 3♣ (Stayman). 6 points and four spades.

4. 3♥ (transfer), then 3NT. 6 points and five spades: opener chooses 4♠ or 3NT.

5. 2♣. 23 points and a strong six-card suit: open 2♣, then bid hearts.

6. 2♦. 5 points: the negative response.

Next: Chapter 9, Pre-emptive Openings. Free lessons and challenge hands to play: **bridgescorer.com/learn**

About this guide. There are many versions of Acol, and clubs, teachers and books do not all agree on every detail. This chapter describes one common, straightforward version for learners. We do not claim it is the only or the best way: if your teacher or club plays something different, follow them. What matters most is that you and your partner agree.

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