

2/1 T-Walsh

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INTRODUCTION

This article presents a coherent bidding structure with many elements of modern bidding, including particularly transfer responses to $1\clubsuit$ and the Gazzilli convention, both of which are not as well-known as they deserve to be, as well as a 2/1 GF structure which does not require the forcing $1NT$ response.

I do not claim any particular originality, all of the ideas have been invented many times over by various other bridge players. I would like to thank everyone who has shared their bidding methods on the Bridge Base Forums, but I am particularly indebted to Victor Chubukov (who designed this set of responses to $1\clubsuit$), Arend Bayer (who first taught me these responses to $1\heartsuit/\spadesuit$), Han Peters and Justin Lall.

This article only covers the openings at the one-level. It is assumed that your two-level openings can cover balanced hands from 20 HCP on upwards and any game-forcing unbalanced hand (or rather, an unbalanced hand worth 22+ points. I consider this a game-force, but if you want to play, say, a Multi which includes a “semi-forcing” in a minor or a strong $2\clubsuit$ opening which allows for a double negative, feel free to do so). Furthermore, it does not cover passed-hand bidding. You should be able to play the same system over $1\clubsuit/\diamond$ and $1NT$ by a passed hand, but you would be well-advised to play something entirely different over $1\heartsuit/\spadesuit$.

Conventions

4441 denotes a hand with exactly 4 spades, 4 hearts, 4 diamonds and 1 club. (4441) denotes any hand with three four-card suits and a singleton. (31)(45) denotes a hand with 3-1 or 1-3 in majors and 4-5 or 5-4 in minors.

Opponents' bids are denoted by parentheses, and a round of bidding is delimited by a semicolon, e. g. $(1\heartsuit) - 1\spadesuit - 2\clubsuit; 2\spadesuit$ means that the opponents opened $1\heartsuit$, we overcalled $1\spadesuit$ and advanced $2\clubsuit$, whereupon overcaller rebid $2\spadesuit$, opponents remaining silent after their opening bid.

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1 OPENING STRUCTURE

| | |
|-----|--|
| 1♣ | a) Any 11-13 balanced hand b) Any 17-19 balanced hand c) Any 11-21 unbalanced hands in which clubs are the longest suit d) 11-21 point hands with 4414, 4144 or 1444 shape. |
| 1♦ | Any unbalanced hand wherein diamonds are the longest suit, or 4441 shape, 11-21 points. |
| 1♥ | 11-21 points with 5+ hearts. If balanced, 11-13 or 17-18, rarely 19. |
| 1♠ | 11-21 points with 5+ spades. If balanced, 11-13 or 17-18, rarely 19. |
| 1NT | 14-16 HCP balanced. Systematically includes all (5332) hands in range. |

I recommend aggressively upgrading 19 HCP hands with a 5-card major to 2NT, or whichever opening shows 20-21 HCP balanced. Whether 1NT can include, say, 6-card minors or (4441)s with a singleton honor is a matter to discuss, but this system is designed to be able to handle them with a 1♣/♦ opening.

One of the goals of this system is to be able to open any hand with 11 HCP, though of course some ugly (4333) hands may be passed. However, you should open any (4432) with 11 HCP 1♣.

As you can see, the 1♣ opening is by far the most common opening in this system.¹ Together with 1.3% of hands which are opened with strong 2-level openings, we open 43.8% of hands, plus preempts of course.

| | |
|-----|-------|
| 1♣ | 16.6% |
| 1♦ | 4.3% |
| 1♥ | 6.5% |
| 1♠ | 8.7% |
| 1NT | 6.4% |

Table 1: Opening frequencies

2 THE 1♣ OPENING

| | |
|-----------------|-------|
| 11-13 balanced | 56.5% |
| 17-19 balanced | 12.6% |
| (4441) shape | 12.8% |
| 5+ clubs unbal. | 18.1% |

Table 2: 1♣ hand-type frequencies

The 1♣ opening shows basically three hand types: the weak NT (11-13), hands which would normally rebid 2NT in a standard system (17-19), or real clubs. Since we open all weak NT hands 1♣, this is what opener has more than half the time (see Table 2). Consequently, responder should stretch to respond on even very weak hands with short clubs, as we do not enjoy playing 3-1 fits, even at the 1-level. QJ9xx in a major and out should be quite enough to respond.

On the other hand, when responder does not hold a 4-card major, he should only bid with a solid holding. With 3334 or (332)5 shape, we pass even holding 6 HCP. The requirements for responding with long diamonds are somewhat

¹These statistics are based on automated analysis of 10,000,000 random deals.

lower but not quite as low as the requirements for responding in a major.

Here is the complete system of responses:

| | |
|------|---|
| 1♦ | 4+ hearts, may have a longer minor. 5+ points or good suit. |
| 1♥ | 4+ spades, may have a longer minor. 5+ points or good suit. |
| 1♠ | 4+ clubs, 7+ points. Denies a 4-card major. |
| 1NT | 6-10 balanced with 5 diamonds or 3343. |
| 2♣ | 6+ diamonds weak (5-9) or 5+ diamonds FG (13+). |
| 2♦ | 6+ diamonds invitational (10-12). |
| 2♥ | (45) or better in minors, 0-1 hearts, 9-12 or very strong. |
| 2♠ | (45) or better in minors, 0-1 spades, 9-12 or very strong. |
| 2NT | Balanced invitational (11-12), denies 4-card major. |
| 3♣ | Weak (4-8) with 6+ clubs. |
| 3♦ | 13-15 balanced. |
| 3♥/♠ | As 2♥/♠ but forcing to game (13-16). |
| 3NT | 16-18 balanced. |

2.1 Responding with a 4-card major

With most hands that contain a 4-card or longer major, responder will transfer to the major. Hands that are 4-4 in majors always respond 1♦; hands that are 5-5 or 6-6 in majors should respond 1♥ but may respond 1♦ if they are very weak.

Opener completes the transfer if he has either the weak NT with 2- or 3-card support, or a minimum (11-15) unbalanced hand with 3-card support. With the strong NT and 2- or 3-card support, opener rebids 1NT. With 4-card support, opener raises the major to the 2-level if he is minimum (11-15), or bids 2♦ with a strong (16+) hand².

With other hands, opener rebids naturally, though with the diamond reverse hand he must bid 2NT as 2♦ is already taken for the strong hands with fit. Here is the complete scheme of rebids:

| | Over 1♦ (hearts) | Over 1♥ (spades) |
|-----|---|-----------------------------|
| 1♥ | Weak NT or 11-15 5+♣s 3♥s | — |
| 1♠ | Natural 11-17 not 3♥s | Weak NT or 11-15 5+♣s 3♠s |
| 1NT | — 17-19 balanced, no 4-card support — | |
| 2♣ | — 11-15 unbalanced, 5+ clubs, no 3-card support — | |
| 2♦ | — Any 16+ hand with 4-card support — | |
| 2♥ | 11-15, 4-card heart support | Natural reverse, 16+ |
| 2♠ | Natural reverse, 18+ | 11-15, 4-card spade support |
| 2NT | — 5+ clubs, 4+ diamonds, 18+ points — | |
| 3♣ | — 6+ clubs, 18+ points — | |

²This is quite similar to the Polish Odwrotka family of conventions

This leaves a choice for opener with a minimum 4315 or 4306 over a 1♦ response. With 11-13 he should complete the transfer, and with 14-17 he should bid 1♠.

2.1.1 After 1♣-1♦; 1♥

With a weak hand and 4 spades, responder bids 1NT. With a weak hand and 5 clubs, responder bids 2♣. These are both non-forcing. Weak hands can also pass, or bid 1♠, which is a request for opener to bid 1NT with a balanced hand, or 2♣ with an unbalanced hand. The 2♣ bid promises 3 hearts, and responder can correct to 2♥ if he is short in clubs.

With an invitational hand, responder also bids 1♠, but then makes another, basically natural bid. 2♣/♦ shows 5+ cards, usually canapé, while 2♠ shows only 4+ with hearts longer. Since we defined 1♣-1♦; 1♥-1♠; 2♣-2♥ as non-forcing, in this case responder must bid 3♥ to invite in hearts, but at least we are already guaranteed a fit.

Finally, with a game-forcing hand, responder can make a natural reverse bid (2♠, 3♣ or 3♦), bid 2♦ as an artificial game force with a balanced or semi-balanced hand, or 2NT to show a single-suited game-force in hearts (this of course implies slam-interest, as 4♥ is also an option, opener having promised 2-3 hearts).

2.1.2 After 1♣-1♥; 1♠

In this sequence we play a more classical two-way checkback system than the lower-level one we can afford when hearts have been shown. 2♣ forces 2♦, either to play or to show any invitational hand 2NT forces 3♣, which is to play or to show a slam try with a really strong hand. The other weak options are pass, 1NT which shows some club tolerance (opener can correct to 2♣ with a hand unsuitable for Notrump), 2♥ (5+ spades and 4+ hearts) and 2♠. With a game-forcing hand, responder bids either an artificial 2♦ or naturally at the 3-level. (Of course, as above, responder can simply bid 4♠ too.)

2.1.3 After 1♣-1♦; 1♠

In this sequence, opener has a rather wide range (11-17), and therefore responder should make another bid on any 8+ point hand. We therefore have a wide range of non-forcing bids available for responder: 1NT, 2♣, 2♥ and 2♠. It is expected that opener will make another move with a maximum (good 15 to 17).

Responder's bids from 2NT to 3♠ are all natural and invitational, that is about 11-12 points. It should be noted that 3♦ here promises 5+ diamonds, but not necessarily more than 4 hearts. For even stronger hands we reserve the artificial game-force bid of 2♦, which is completely analogous to the standard fourth-suit-forcing auction of 1♣-1♥; 1♠-2♦.

2.1.4 The 1NT rebid showing 17-19 balanced

The following structure has some complexities, and if they are too much of a memory drain, you may play as if the previous round of bidding hadn't happened and a 17-19 1NT had been opened. However, to take advantage of the fact that opener has already denied 4-card support for responder's major, we play the following:

| | Over 1♣-1♦; 1NT | Over 1♣-1♥; 1NT |
|------|---|---|
| 2♣ | — GF relay — | — GF relay — |
| 2♦ | Retransfer, 5+ hearts | Transfer, 4+ hearts |
| 2♥ | Weak, both majors | Retransfer, denies 4 hearts |
| 2♠ | — Transfer to clubs (usually weak) — | — Transfer to clubs (usually weak) — |
| 2NT | — Invitational — | — Invitational — |
| 3♣ | — Transfer to diamonds (usually weak) — | — Transfer to diamonds (usually weak) — |
| 3NT | — To play. — | — To play. — |
| 4♠/♥ | — Retransfer to hearts/spades — | — Retransfer to hearts/spades — |

Transferring to a minor and then bidding 4 of that minor is RKCB. Transferring to a minor and then bidding 3NT implies concentrated values and suggests correction to 5 of the minor or a 4-3 major fit if opener lacks a decent stopper in one of the other suits.

Retransferring and then bidding 2/3/4NT shows exactly 5 cards in the major and invitational/game-forcing/slam-invitational values. Retransferring at the 4-level followed by 4NT is Blackwood.

With 5+ spades and 4+ hearts, responder bids 2♦, transfer to hearts. With 4 hearts, opener completes the transfer, otherwise he bids 2♠. Afterwards, 2♠/2NT/3♥ are invitational.

With any game-forcing hand not covered by the above sequences, responder bids 2♣, a game-forcing relay. The response structure is:

| | Over 1♣-1♦; 1NT-2♣ | Over 1♣-1♥; 1NT-2♣ |
|-----|--|--|
| 2♦ | (4432) with 3♥ (2♥ asks d.) | (4432) with 2♠ (2♥ asks t.) |
| 2♥ | (4432) with 2♥ (2♠ asks t.) | (4432) with 3♠ (2♠ asks d.) |
| 2♠ | — Five diamonds (2NT asks doubleton) — | — Five diamonds (2NT asks doubleton) — |
| 2NT | — Five clubs (3♣ asks doubleton) — | — Five clubs (3♣ asks doubleton) — |
| 3♣ | — 3334 — | — 3334 — |
| 3♦ | — 3343 — | — 3343 — |
| 3♥ | 4333 | 3343 |

The answers to the doubleton/triplet ask are natural – if 2NT is available it can be used in place of the most expensive answer. For example, after 1♣-1♥; 1NT-2♣; 2♥-2♠, 3♣ shows 3442 shape, 3♦ shows 3424 shape, and the 3244 shape is shown with 2NT (however in case opener forgets he can also bid 3♥ to show the same shape).

After this relay, responder's bids are as follows: game bids are to play, bids below game set trump and are RKCB, 5 of a major is invitational, mainly asking about trump quality, and 4NT is a quantitative invite, unless 3 of responder's first major was not available, in which case 4NT becomes RKCB for opener's major. These same interpretations apply if responder makes a bid other than the tripleton/doubleton ask after the first relay. If opener accepts a 4NT invitation, he should do so with 5NT to give responder the option of preferring a minor-suit slam.

2.1.5 The natural 2♣ rebid

Opener's 2♣ rebid is natural, showing 11-15 points and denying 3-card support for responder's major. 1♣-1♦; 2♣ is a very simple auction, because opener has also denied 4 spades. He might have very long clubs but more often he will have secondary diamonds. So 2♦ and 2♥ are simply to play, 2NT invitational and anything else forcing.

Over 1♣-1♥; 2♣ we switch the 2♦ and 2♥ rebids in order to allow responder to look for a fit without necessarily committing to game:

| | Over 2♦ (4+ hearts) | Over 2♥ (4+ diamonds) |
|-----|---|-----------------------|
| 2♥ | 4 hearts | - |
| 2♠ | — 2 spades, no 4-card support for second suit — | — |
| 2NT | — No fit, maximum — | — |
| 3♣ | — No fit, minimum — | — |
| 3♦ | - | 4 diamonds |

2.1.6 The fit-reverse

With 16+ points and a 4-card fit for responder's major, opener makes an artificial rebid of 2♦. This can be done with the 17-19 balanced hand, a strong (4441), or a club hand which was planning to reverse into opener's major.

Responder now classifies his hand as subminimum (3-5), weak (6-8), medium (9-11) or strong (12+). With a subminimum hand or a weak hand with exactly four trumps, his rebid is 2 of the major. With a weak hand and five or more trumps, he rebids 3 of the major. With a medium hand, responders' options are to bid a good side-suit naturally, 3NT with exactly four trumps and no good side-suit, and 4 of the major with with 5+ trumps and no good side-suit. With a strong hand, opener jumps in a new suit as a splinter, or bids 2NT if he has no singleton or void.

The major is set as trumps unless: a) opener raises responder's side-suit, or b) opener bids 3♣ showing 5+ good clubs and responder raises to 4♣. An immediate 3NT over responder's good side-suit or 2NT is an offer to play there. In all other cases, frivolous 3NT applies.

2.1.7 Natural reverses and 2NT

Since we have used the 2♦ rebid to show a fit, we are left with only two natural reverse sequences:

1. 1♣–1♦; 2♠
2. 1♣–1♥; 2♥

For the first of these we require a full 18+ points, since we allow for a wide range in the 1♠ rebid. The second sequence can be made on as little as 16 points, though with a bad 16 one should consider a downgrade to 1♠ or 2♣.

In both cases, we play Lebensohl: responder can bid 2NT to show weakness, and opener bids 3♣ if he is willing to accept a sign-off, in which case responder places the final contract. All other continuations are natural and game-forcing. We play FADS, so a direct 3NT by responder shows the values for game but no stopper in the fourth suit, whereas bidding 3NT via Lebensohl shows a stopper.

Since 2♦ is not available as a natural reverse, a strong hand with diamonds as the second suit must bid 2NT. This shows in principle 16+ points, though of course a flat 2245 with only 16 points might sometimes be opened 1NT. Responder can bid 3♣/♦ to show less than 8 points and preference; anything going beyond that is natural and forcing to game.

2.2 The 1♠ response

2.3 Responding with diamonds

Three actions are available which focus on diamonds, but they are compressed into only two bids. 2♣ shows a weak (5-9) or game-forcing (13+) hand with diamonds, whereas 2♦ shows an invitational (10-12) hand. The weak and invitational variants show 6+ diamonds and deny a 4-card major, whereas the game-forcing variant promises only 5 diamonds and may have a 4-card major.

Facing the 2♣ response, opener simply bids 2♦ if willing to play there opposite the weak variant, and naturally otherwise. Noncompletion of the transfer is forcing. Opener may bid a major at the two-level either with 5 cards (and thus 6+ clubs), looking for a 5-3 fit, or with a weak holding in the other major, hoping that responder can bid 2NT. Opener's 2NT rebid shows the 17-19 balanced hand, over which 3♦ and 2NT are to play and other bids are natural and forcing.

If opener completes the transfer and responder bids on, it is natural and forcing to game.

2.4 Balanced responses without a 4-card major

2.5 The splinter responses with both minors

3 THE 1♦ OPENING

It must be stressed that this opening absolutely promises an unbalanced hand. If you have 3352 shape, open 1♣ or 1NT instead! We will be putting this restriction to good use when we define opener's rebids.

The only case in which the 1♦ opening can contain less than 5 diamonds is with exactly 4441 shape. This is because we want to maintain some semblance of being a natural system and shy away from opening 1♣ with a singleton club. However, judgement is allowed, and it may happen that a 4441 hand with weak diamonds and a singleton club honor feels more like a balanced hand. . .

Here are the responses:

| | |
|------|---|
| 1♥ | 4+ hearts, 6+ points. |
| 1♠ | 4+ spades, 6+ points. |
| 1NT | 7-11 balanced, non-forcing. |
| 2♣ | Forcing to game with 5+ clubs or 3334 shape. |
| 2♦ | Forcing to game with 4+ diamonds. |
| 2♥/♠ | 6+ cards, 3-6 points. |
| 2NT | Invitational (11-12) with 3334 or 3325 shape. |
| 3♣ | Invitational (10-11) with 4+ diamonds. |
| 3♦ | Preemptive (3-9) with 4+ diamonds. |

Since partner has about 5 and a half diamonds on average, we are not afraid to jump to 3♦ preemptively with weak hands even on shapes such as (31)45.

3.1 Major suit responses

3.2 Other responses

4 THE 1♥/♠ OPENINGS

Ye olde 5-card majors. There is not much to say here except that we prefer to open 1NT with 14-16 and (5332) shape. Here are the response:

| | Over 1♥ | Over 1♠ |
|-----|--|-----------------------------|
| 1♠ | 6+ points, 4+ spades | – |
| 1NT | — 6-12 points, non-forcing, no other bid available — | |
| 2♣ | — Invitational with 3-card fit OR balanced GF OR GF with ♣ — | |
| 2♦ | — Game-forcing with 5+ diamonds — | |
| 2♥ | Raise with 6-9 points | Game-forcing with 5+ hearts |
| 2♠ | Invitational with 6+ spades | Raise with 6-9 points |
| 2NT | — Invitational or better with 4+ card fit — | |
| 3♣ | — Invitational with 6+ clubs — | |
| 3♦ | — Invitational with 6+ diamonds — | |
| 3♥ | Preemptive raise (0-5) | Invitational with 6+ hearts |
| 3♠ | Splinter | Preemptive raise (0-5) |

4.1 The 1♠ and 1NT responses

These are much as in Standard American, in fact unlike classical 2/1 systems our 1NT response is nonforcing (Some prefer to call this approach “semiforcing”). The 1♠ response shows almost any hand with 6+ points and 4+ spades, though with a heart fit responder may raise hearts rather than looking for a possibly better second fit. The 1NT response shows a hand strong enough to respond (6+) but with no suitable other bid, thus including – and that is the only difference to Standard – hands in the invitational range (10-11) with a very weak 6-card suit.

With 11-13 balanced, opener passes a 1NT response, and rebids 1NT after 1♥–1♠. After 1♥–1♠; 1NT, we play two-way checkback: 2♣ forces 2♦, either to play or to show any invitational hand, 2♦ is an artificial game force, and 2♥/♠ are to play.

Otherwise, with a minimum (11-15) hand, opener rebids as follows: with a single-suited hand, rebid the major, otherwise rebid your (4+ card) second suit, except in the case of 5 hearts and 4 spades. These hands will obviously raise a 1♠ response to 2♠, but over 1NT, they should generally pass (11-13) or rebid 2♥ (14-15). Thus we dilute our 2♥ rebid to sometimes show only 5 cards, but in this case it is at least at the top end of the range.

As an exception, with shapely hands (5-5 for a two-suiter, or good 6-card suit with a singleton/void for a single-suiter) at the top of the range (14-15), opener can bid reverse or jump shift, e.g. 1♥–1♠; 3♣, 1♥–1NT; 2♠, 1♠–1NT 3♠, etc.

Finally, with any 16+ point hand, opener rebids 2♣.

4.1.1 The Gazzilli convention

We have thus assigned two possible meanings to opener’s 2♣ rebid which need to be sorted out . . .

4.2 Raising partner's major

With a minimum response (6-9) and a fit for partner's major, our first (and often last) duty is to show our support by raising the major to the 2-level. With even less (0-5), 4-card support and some shape (especially NOT (4333)!), we lawfully raise partner's major to the 3-level.

As for invitational hands, we distinguish between 3-card support and 4-card support. With 3-card support, we respond 2♣, but this also contains other hand types. The continuations are discussed in section 4.3.1.

With 4-card support and invitational or better hands, we bid 2NT. With game-forcing hands we can of course bid a splinter instead.

Finally, with game-forcing values but only 3-card support, we begin by bidding our longest suit and show our support later.

4.2.1 The Swedish 2NT raise

4.3 2/1 forcing to game responses

4.3.1 The 3-way 2♣

Over 1♥/♠, our 2♣ response shows any of the following hand types:

1. 3-card support for partner's major with exactly invitational strength,
2. a game-force with 5+ clubs or
3. a balanced game-force with (4333) or (4432) shape.

In order to let us clarify, opener will almost always bid 2♦. Bidding anything other than 2♦ shows exceptional distribution (5-5, (7321) or better) and the strength to accept any invitation. If responder was merely planning to invite, he will jump to 4 of opener's major.

In the more normal case of 1♥/♠-2♣; 2♦, responder's rebids are as follows: 2 of the major show the invitational hand, 2NT shows the balanced game-force, and any other bid shows clubs. Notably, 1♥-2♣; 2♦-3♥ shows a game-force with 3 (or possibly more, if responder is very strong) hearts and 5+ clubs.

4.4 Invitational jump responses

Responder's immediate jump shift shows a hand with exactly invitational strength, no fit, and a decent 6-card or longer suit. While bidding 11-point hands with a Qxxxx suit via 1NT is no fun, we nevertheless stipulate some

minimum suit quality because we also want to find some 3_{NT} games on less than 25 HCP. Thus, QJT_{xxx} or KJ9_{xxx} should be considered a minimum for this bid.

The continuations are simple and natural. Opener with somewhat more than a minimum can bid game, in either of the named suits or NT. With a minimum he can simply pass, and with a very strong hand he bids anything else, forcing. 4_{NT} would be RKCB for responder's suit.

5 THE 1NT OPENING