



Opener's Choice of Rebid

Opener doesn't need an honor in hearts to raise, only three-card or longer support. 4♥ is a much better contract than 3NT, which would fail on a diamond lead.

Support for Responder's Minor

Responder doesn't guarantee a five-card suit for a response of 2♣ or 2♦. Also, game in a minor suit is usually less attractive than game in notrump. So **four-card support is normally expected to raise responder's minor, although opener can raise with strong three-card support and a suit-oriented hand.**

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

WEST	EAST
1♥	2♣ ★
3♣	

West has only three-card support for responder's minor, but with all the high cards in hearts and clubs, raises to 3♣. This will encourage East to continue to the excellent slam.

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

WEST	EAST
1♥	2♣ ★
2NT	

With poor three-card support for clubs and the high cards located in the other suits, West chooses 2NT as the most descriptive rebid. That will slow East down. East will likely make a slam-invitational raise to 4NT, but the partnership should stop safely in a game contract.

Showing a Second Suit

Opener should always show a second five-card suit or a four-card heart suit. Whether opener should show a side four-card minor suit depends on both the quality of the suit and the convenience of showing it.

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

WEST	EAST
1♥	2♦ ★
3♣	

If West doesn't show the club suit on the rebid, even with a minimum strength opening bid, there is little chance the excellent 6♣ contract will be reached. The partnership might land in a poor 3NT or 4♥.

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

WEST	EAST
1♥	2♣ ★
2♦	

It is convenient for West to make the natural rebid showing the second suit. Pinpointing the potential weakness in spades might steer the partnership away from 3NT into the excellent 5♣.

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

WEST	EAST
1♥	2♦ ★
2NT	3NT

With a weak four-card club suit that would have to be bid at the three level, West makes the more descriptive rebid of 2NT. The partnership misses its 4-4 club fit, but that's a good thing. 3NT is a fine spot; 5♣ has almost no chance.

When responder makes a 2/1 game forcing response ★, opener has to choose a descriptive rebid that will best help the partnership decide **WHERE** to play. There's no need to worry about showing extra strength, since that can be shown later. The focus is on opener's distribution.

Support for Responder's Major

The only 2/1 auction where responder immediately shows a major is:

WEST (OPENER)	EAST (RESPONDER)
1♠	2♥ ★

Raising partner's major when there is a known eight-card or longer fit is a top priority in any situation. Since responder's 2♥ bid promises at least a five-card suit, opener raises with three-card or longer support.

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

WEST	EAST
1♠	2♥ ★
3♥	4♥

Note that opener raises the major instead of bidding notrump, even with a balanced hand. The partnership wants to find an eight-card major suit fit even when opener is balanced.

Rebidding Opener's Suit

With rare exceptions, a rebid of opener's suit shows a six-card or longer suit.

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

WEST	EAST
1♠	2♦ ★
2♠	4♠

Although West has three-card support for responder's minor, the priority is to show the six-card major. It's the length that's important, not the strength. East can put the partnership in game in the eight-card fit. 4♠ is a much better contract than 3NT or 5♦.

Handling 6-4 Distribution

With 6-4 distribution, opener usually bids the four-card suit in preference to rebidding the six-card suit, unless the four-card suit is very weak or cannot be shown at the two level.

Opener can later rebid the first suit to show a six-card suit.

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

WEST	EAST
1♠	2♣ ★
2♥	2NT
3♠	4♠

When opener shows the second suit, responder can suggest notrump as the best spot. Opener now rebids the six-card major, and the partnership lands in its eight-card fit. Notice that this is a comfortable auction in 2/1. Responder doesn't need to jump to 3NT on the second bid, since 2NT is forcing. Both partners have an opportunity to describe their hand.

Some authorities recommend that opener rebid the six-card major first with a minimum opening, and only bid the four-card suit on the rebid when holding extra values. That approach has some merit, but the suggested approach makes things clearer in an auction like this:

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

WEST	EAST
1♠	2♦ ★
2♠	3♦
3♥	3NT

Since the 2♠ rebid denies a four-card heart suit, opener can conveniently show some strength in hearts at the third opportunity, allowing responder to confidently bid 3NT.

Opener's 2NT Rebid

If opener can't support responder's suit, doesn't have a second suit to bid, and doesn't have a six-card or longer suit to rebid, opener bids 2NT.

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

WEST	EAST
1♠	2♣ ★
2NT	3NT

West shows a balanced hand with the 2NT rebid, and the partnership easily reaches the best spot.

Although West will usually have a minimum balanced hand for a 2NT rebid, it only describes the shape, not the strength. With a balanced hand of 18-19 points, for example, opener would still rebid 2NT, planning to show the extra strength later.

Does opener need *stoppers* (see insert) in the unbid suits to bid 2NT?

Suppose opener has this hand and the auction begins the same way.

WEST	EAST
1♠	2♣ ★
?	

Although some authorities insist that opener must have a stopper in any unbid suit to rebid 2NT after a 2/1 response, consider the alternatives. Opener can't support responder's clubs with only a doubleton. Opener can't bid a new suit with only three

cards. (Opener can bid a three-card minor in some situations, such as after a forcing 1NT response, but not in this situation.) A 2♠ rebid would show a six-card suit. So the recommendation is:

After a 2/1 game forcing response, opener's 2NT rebid doesn't guarantee a stopper in the unbid suits.

These might be the combined hands:

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

WEST	EAST
1♠	2♣ ★
2NT	3NT

The partnership reaches 3NT when neither player has a diamond stopper. Still, 3NT is the best contract. The defenders may not lead a diamond, the missing diamonds might be divided 4-3, or the suit might be blocked. ♦

This is part of a series of articles by Eric on 2/1 game force. Eric is a world-class player and theorist. Previous articles in the series can be found at:

www.betterbridge.com/articles

WHAT IS A STOPPER?

A *stopper* is a value that will, or likely will, stop the opponents from taking all the tricks in a suit they lead.

An Ace is obviously a stopper, as is K-Q or Q-J-10. Since the opening lead comes around to declarer's hand, a holding such as Q-J-2 would also be a stopper.

Many other holdings serve as a stopper in the same way: K-2, K-3-2, K-J, K-J-2. Even if a holding like this doesn't win a trick — because the opponents don't lead the suit at trick one —, they must lead something else, which might give declarer time to develop tricks in other suits.

Some holdings such as Q-2, J-3-2, or 10-7-5-4, are called a *½ stopper*. If partner has a similar holding, the combined holdings make a full stopper.