



How does opener describe the hand after partner makes a 2/1 response? Is it the same as standard methods? As **Eric Rodwell** explains in this article, opener has some new options.

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

Opener's role is typically as the **describer**. The opening bid starts the description, and opener's second bid—the rebid—provides a further opportunity to narrow down both the strength and distribution of the hand. Responder will then be well-placed to direct the partnership to the best contract.

For example, a 1♥ or 1♠ opening bid covers a wide range of strength:

Minimum	Medium	Maximum
13	14	15
16	17	18
19	20	21

It shows at least a five-card suit, but covers a wide range of distribution. Opener could be balanced with 5-3-3-2 shape, or very unbalanced with 7-5-1-0 shape for example.

Let's look at how opener goes about describing the hand when

Opener's Rebid After 2/1

responder makes a 2/1 response. For example, when the auction begins:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	2♣	★ Pass
?			

East's 2♣ bid—a new suit by responder—is forcing, of course, but the key difference with standard methods is that it is a marathon bid ★, forcing to game playing 2/1. In standard bidding, the partnership is not committed to game. Let's see how this impacts opener's choice of rebid.

Rebids with Balanced Hands

After a 2/1 response, **opener shows a balanced hand with a rebid of 2NT**. For example:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	2♣	★ Pass
?			

♠ K 9 4
♥ A J 8 5 3
♦ J 8 2
♣ A 3

This is a minimum balanced hand with 13 high-card points. 2NT is the most descriptive rebid.

West would make the same rebid in standard methods. The difference is that the 2NT rebid would not be forcing. **In 2/1, the 2NT rebid is forcing to game.**

To see the difference to standard methods, let's change opener's hand:

♠ K 9 4
♥ A K J 8 5
♦ A 2
♣ Q J 3

This time we have 18 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card heart suit. Using standard methods, opener has to jump to 3NT, since 2NT is not forcing and opener doesn't want to stop short of game.

In 2/1, opener rebids only 2NT! This describes the shape of the hand

but leaves plenty of room to explore other possibilities. The 2NT rebid won't be passed, and opener plans to show the extra strength later, after hearing responder's next bid. So, **a 2NT rebid by opener can show a minimum or a maximum balanced hand**—a medium-strength balanced hand would have been opened 1NT.

The advantage of this approach can be seen if the combined hands look something like this:

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	2♣	★ Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♣	Pass	6♣	Pass
Pass	Pass		

When West rebids 2NT, East initially assumes West has only a minimum balanced hand, and simply raises to 3NT. Now West bids again to show a maximum-strength hand, three-card support for clubs, and interest in slam. It's possible to have a more sophisticated auction to slam at this point, but this simple auction will do for now. With extra length in clubs and aces and kings, East accepts the slam try. The only trick to be lost is the ♣A.

In standard bidding, the auction would likely go:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	2♣	● Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

West has to jump to 3NT to show the extra strength, and East, unaware of the club fit, is unlikely to want to move beyond game.

In summary, opener can show a balanced hand at the cheapest level after a 2/1 response. Opener can 'catch up' later with a big hand, saving some valuable bidding room in the process.

Rebids with Unbalanced Hands

With an unbalanced hand, opener can bid a second suit, raise responder's suit, or rebid the original suit. There's no need to jump, since the partnership is already forced to game.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	2♣	★ Pass
?			

♠ 8 4
♥ A Q 8 5 4 3
♦ K Q 10 2
♣ 3

West would rebid 2♦ with this hand. A new suit at the two level doesn't promise any extra values. Showing the second suit is more descriptive than rebidding the hearts. Partner already knows you have five hearts. By bidding 2♦, partner will now know nine of the cards in the hand—at least five hearts and at least four diamonds.

Rebidding 2♥ would show only the sixth heart, a far less descriptive bid. There's no hurry to show the extra length in hearts. Since the partnership is forced to game, West will have an opportunity to show the extra length later.

In standard methods, West's choice would be less clearcut. A 2♦ rebid covers a wide range of strength, and West might want to show a minimum opening by rebidding 2♥.

This would be an awkward hand in standard methods, since a 2♠ rebid would be a 'reverse', promising extra values. West would have to rebid 2♥ to show a minimum. Not a very descriptive rebid.

In 2/1, West can rebid 2♠. This doesn't promise any extra strength, since the partnership is already committed to at least the game level.

The only time opener needs to be careful about showing a second suit is if it has to be bid at the three level. Since this takes up a lot of bidding space, it shows something 'extra':

- At least a five-card suit, *or*
- 15+ high-card points

Without the extra values, opener will have to rebid 2NT, even with a slightly unbalanced hand.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	2♥	★ Pass
?			

♠ A Q 9 7 6
♥ 2
♦ K J 10 5 3
♣ Q 2

With a second five-card suit, opener can bid it at the three level, 3♦, even with a minimum hand.

With extra strength, opener can afford to go to the three level and bid 3♦, even with a four-card suit.

With neither a five-card suit nor extra high-card strength, opener should settle for a 2NT rebid.

With support for responder's suit, opener can simply raise to the three level, even with extra strength. There is no need to use up valuable bidding space when showing the fit. The extra strength can always be shown later.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	2♣	★ Pass
?			

♠ A J 8 6 2
♥ K 4
♦ 8 2
♣ K J 5 2

With four-card support for responder's suit, West raises to 3♣, even with a minimum opening bid.

With a much stronger hand, West can also make a simple raise to the three level.

There's no danger of stopping below game, and opener can always show the extra strength later, after hearing responder's next bid. There's lots of room for the partnership to explore the possibility of a small slam, or even a grand slam.

A rebid of opener's major suit following a 2/1 response promises at least a six-card suit. Opener may have a minimum hand or extra values. As in all the previous examples, once the partnership is committed to game, the priority is to determine WHERE the partnership belongs. HOW HIGH—game or slam—can always be determined later.

Here are some examples.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	2♦	★ Pass
?			

♠ K Q 9 7 6 4
♥ K Q 3
♦ J 4
♣ 9 4

With a six-card suit and a minimum opening bid, West rebids 2♠. Knowing opener has a six-card or longer suit will be valuable information for responder.

With considerable extra values, West makes the same rebid of 2♠. The priority is to show the extra length. The extra strength can wait until a fit has been found.

Let's see how the auction might develop after opener rebids the major suit.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	2♦	★ Pass
2♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

After West rebids the spades, East raises to show the fit. East doesn't need to jump to 4♠, because the partnership is already committed to game. East wants to leave room in case West is interested in slam. In this case, West has nothing extra and signs off in game.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	2♦	★ Pass
2♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♥	Pass
6♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

This time, the auction starts the same way, but once East shows the spade fit, West can launch into Blackwood and bid the excellent slam when the partnership is missing only one ace.

2/1 game force often makes it easy to decide HOW HIGH and WHERE. ♦