

## WASHINGTON BRIDGE LEAGUE

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### The Weak Two Bid , part 1

The first question I have received is one that is often asked of our 0-20 Unit Game Directors, Bryan and Lois Geer. "When should I open and how do you respond to a weak two bid?" Before giving you my thoughts on what an opening weak two bid looks like, we have to consider the three reasons to open the bidding with a weak two bid.

#### 1. Constructive bidding

: If this is our hand, I wish to offer a place to play. I can define my hand with one bid within fairly specific guidelines - 5-10 HCP and a six card suit. Partner should be in a pretty good position to place the hand based on this information.

2. **Destructive bidding** : If you open a weak two bid, this can have a preemptive effect on the opponents. For example, if you open 2<sup>a</sup>, they cannot bid anything on the one or two level. Your bid makes it much harder for them to find their optimal contract.

#### -3. Lead direction

: If the opponents buy the contract, I wish to suggest a lead. For example, consider the following auction: P, 2<sup>a</sup>, 4<sup>♥</sup>, P, P, P. 2<sup>a</sup> may suggest to your passed partner an attacking lead. This may be in a suit that partner would not have led otherwise. Standard textbooks for weak twos suggest very stringent guidelines. Each of the following hands would qualify for a weak two bid:--(1) ♠AKxxxx ♥xx ♦xxx ♣xx (2) ♠x ♥KQTxxx ♦Qxx ♣xxx (3) ♠Kx ♥xx ♦AQTxxx ♣xxx

Note the following things that these hands have in common :-

- No strong outside suit.
- A six card suit headed by two of the top three honors
- Six to ten high card points.

In my opinion, these guidelines are too strict. In deciding to bid, one needs to balance safety against your ability to compete for the contract. How disciplined your bidding decisions are a matter of partnership style. Follow-up bidding to weak two bids. When partner opens a weak two bid, and you have a good hand, you need a way to create a forcing auction. My suggestion of how to follow up your weak two bids is as follows:

#### Single raise

: Non forcing. This essentially raises the level of the preempt and can be done on most hands with three card support. Direct double raise. Over a major suit weak two, this can either be a strong hand with enough values for game. You might also do this with a preemptive hand with four card support and an outside singleton. Example hands over a 2<sup>a</sup> opening might be: ♠AKxx ♥Qxx ♦Kx ♣KQxx. You expect to make game opposite a weak two, but don't have enough values to try for slam. Sign off in 4<sup>♠</sup>. ♦xxxx ♥Kxxx ♦x ♣xxxx. You probably won't make four hearts, but the opponents are surely cold for game, and possible slam in another suit. Your raise to game will not go down many tricks, and will make it difficult for the opponents to bid accurately.

#### Bid a new suit

Sometimes, even though partner opened the bidding with a weak two, you may wish to suggest your suit as trumps. This bid should be forcing for at least one round. Partner can raise, return to their own suit, or introduce a second suit of their own. For example, over a 2<sup>a</sup> opening, if I held ♠AKJxxxx ♥x ♦Axx ♣Kx, it is likely that spades is a better trump suit than hearts. You can start your constructive.

#### Auction with a forcing 2<sup>a</sup>bid. 2NT response

: There are several conventional ways to play a 2NT response to a weak two. This should be a forcing response aimed at learning more about partner's hand. The most common way to play this response is asking for a hand feature. Opener should show an outside ace or king if they have one, and return to three of the trump suit without an outside feature. Typically, this is a way to differentiate between a minimum weak two and a maximum weak two. Partner may be trying to understand how good your hand is, or may be trying to get to 3NT but needs help in one of the outside suits. ♠AQxx ♥Kx ♦xxx ♣Axxx. Respond 2NT to an opening 2<sup>a</sup> bid. If partner shows a diamond feature, you may try 3NT rather than 4<sup>♠</sup> as your game contract.

#### 3NT

: This is a signoff. Never correct this to your suit. Partner may be running a suit of his own, or may have a strong balanced hand. In our next article, we will explore exceptions to the opening rules, and look at a more modern aggressive view on opening a weak two bid.