

By BBOer Fluff (Bernard Marcoux)

In this article (quite long, sorry about that - but I promise it is worth it), we will examine a convention that is called XYZ. Many top players play that convention. My partner and I have been playing this for a great number of years and we have worked a lot to develop and refine it.

Why xyz? What does that mean?

1x 1y

1z

meaning

1any 1any

1any

The only important thing is that opener's rebid is at the one level, either a suit or NT.

So, when the bidding goes that way, a 2♣ rebid by responder is artificial, forcing opener to bid 2♦.

Opener Responder

1♣ 1♥

1♠/1nt 2♣!

ALERT! If they ask, you say: partner orders me to bid 2♦ (or, if you have to self-alert, artificial, forces 2♦ by opener)

This relay generally initiates INVITATIONAL sequences. Responder can show a number of hands with invitational strength. But this relay can also be used for this:

Opener Responder

1♦ 1y

1z 2♣

2♦ Pass

The 2♣ forces opener to bid 2♦ and responder then passes.

A direct 2♦ rebid by responder is artificial and Game Forcing, even if opener's first bid was 1♦:

Opener Responder

1♣/1♦ 1♥

1♠/1nt 2♦!

ALERT! If they ask, you say: Artificial, Game Forcing.

So if you want to play 2♦, as responder, you cannot bid 2♦ directly. You have to use 2♣ and pass over the forced 2♦ rebid by opener.

The general structure is this:

A 2♣ rebid by responder is artificial and asks opener to bid 2♦. Responder will then pass or show different invitational hands.

A 2♦ rebid by responder is artificial, game-forcing, and asks opener to describe his hand.

What do we lose? After xyz, we cannot play 2♣. Who wants to play 2♣???

1. Invitational sequences

Opener Responder

1m 1y

1nt ?

Quick studies will have noticed that we have now 2 ways to invite by 2nt:

we can bid it directly after the 1nt, or

go through the artificial 2♣, forcing 2♦ by opener, and then rebid 2nt.

As nature hates voids, these 2 ways have to show different things. My partner and I play Lebensohl Fast Shows. So, to make it easy on memory, we play the same thing here: direct 2nt shows 11-12 points and a 4 card fit in opener's minor, or at least Hxx, the honour being A, K or Q.

Opener Responder

1♦ 1M

1nt 2nt = partner, I have 11-12 and 4 cards in diamonds, or Hxx

If you go through 2♣, then rebid 2nt (slow way), you still have 11-12 points, but deny 4 cards in opener's minor. Opener with AKxxx, knowing a 4 card fit in his suit or Qxx, can better evaluate the trick taking potential.

Opener Responder

1♦ 1M

1nt 2♣

2♦ 2nt = partner, I have 11-12 points, but not 4 cards in your suit

What do you do if you have 5+ cards in opener's minor?

You go through the relay and then support.

Opener Responder

1♦ 1M

1nt 2♣

2♦ 3♦ = partner, I have an invitational hand with 5+ cards in your suit

Same thing if the opening bid was 1♣.

Opener Responder

1♣ 1M

1nt 2♣

2♦ 3♣ = partner, I have an invitational hand with 5+ cards in your suit

So what do you do with this hand:

Opener Responder

1♣ 1♠

1nt 3♣ = weak, preemptive

The jump to 3♣ at second turn by responder is weak, preemptive. Remember: after xyz, you cannot play 2♣.

Let's see this sequence now:

Opener Responder

1♣ 1♥

1♠ 2♣

2♦ 2♥

What is responder showing? He is showing an invitational hand with 5+ hearts. The advantage is that responder will play 2♥ instead of 3, as it would have happened if he were using standard methods. If he had 6 good hearts, responder would go like this.

Opener Responder

1♣ 1♥

1♠ 2♣

2♦ 3♥ = I have invitational values and 6 good hearts, AQJxxx, AQ109xx

If you have this hand:

Opener Responder

1♦ 1♥

1♠ ?

Using standard methods, you have to jump to 3♣, showing invitational values. With xyz, you can show the limit raise and still play at the 2 level.

Opener Responder

1♦ 1♥

1♠ 2♣

2♦ 2♠

Pass

Very economical, no? Everybody will be in 3♣, struggling, while you will play a cool and relaxed 2♠.

Opener opens 1♥.

The case with the 1♥ opening bid is interesting.

Opener Responder

1♥ 1♠

1nt ?

Responder still has 2 ways to invite in no trump: directly and indirectly. So we have defined this agreement: direct way (Lebensohl fast shows) shows a helpful doubleton in hearts, Hx or at least J10.

Opener Responder

1♥ 1♠

1nt 2nt = partner, I have 11-12 with Hx in hearts, or at least J10

Knowing that, opener can now count tricks (instead of points) if his heart suit is AQJxx (responder shows the K, so 5 tricks there) or KQxxx (responder shows Ax or J10, so at least 4 sure tricks there).

If you go through the relay, you still have 11-12 points, but no useful cards in opener's suit.

Opener Responder

1♥ 1♠

1nt 2♣

2♦ 2nt = partner, I have 11-12, but nothing to help you in hearts

Let's see a few example hands:

Responder's 3♣ says "partner, I have 11-12, 5 hearts and 5 clubs".

Responder's 3♥ says "partner, I have 11-12, 5 spades and 5 hearts".

Now 2♥ says "partner, I have 11-12, 5 spades and 4+ hearts".

As always with xyz, if opener is minimum, you will play at 2nd level instead of 3rd level with standard methods. Big advantage.

The 2♣ relay initiates invitational sequences, but we can use it also for this type of hand:

In standard methods, you have probably only one bid: 4nt quantitative. But why play 4nt when you can play 3nt?

Opener Responder

1♦ 1♠

1nt 2♣

2♦ 3nt = partner, I have 19 pts, an invitational hand for slam
Opener will decide.

2. Game forcing sequences

Let's start by saying that any jump rebid by responder (except 3♣ preemptive) is Game Forcing and shows a good suit. By any jump rebid, we mean:

responder jumps (rebid) in his own suit;

responder jumps (rebid) in support of opener's suit;

responder jumps (rebid) in a new suit.

Examples:

The jump to 3♠ is game forcing and shows very good spades.

The jump to 3♠, this time in opener's suit, is game forcing and shows very good spades (at least 2 top honors)

The jump to 3♥ shows a two-suited hand with both majors 5-5, good spades and hearts

What do you do if your suit is not that good?

In this case, responder can use the artificial 2♦ to set the game force, then continue to describe the hand.

Examples:

The jump to 3♠ shows a game forcing hand with 6 spades with some holes. Opener with Kx in spades can then simply bid game with a minimum or cue-bid with a maximum.

I will end this looong article with a fun hand we played in a live competition:

I know, this jump to 7♠ is majestic, but my partner likes those jumps. We have also defined this rule: after a major suit fit is found, we NEVER play 3NT. So 3NT becomes available for a new meaning, and it says: I have slam aspirations, but I don't have the Ace of clubs. Please tell me if you have it.

Notice that with the void, RKC is not efficient. The jump to 3♠, promising 2 top honors, clarifies everything for opener, guaranteeing that the trump suit is solid.

It would be too long to examine all sequences, but the bridge playing readers can appreciate this basic structure and develop their own refinements.

One last thing: in competition, xyz is always ON, except when opener doesn't make a bid, meaning if he passes. If he bids something, even a double, xyz is on.

Hope you liked this article and that you will adopt xyz, a simple and fun convention to play