

# The Strong 2 Club Opening

## Very Strong Hands

From time to time you will be dealt a hand of exceptional strength. Perhaps your hand is so strong that you can make a game in your own hand:

AKQJ986 AQ KQJ 6

It's hard to see how you could lose anything more than 1 club, 1 diamond, and 1 heart, even if partner has no points at all.

Not all exceptional hands have to be quite that exceptional. But here are some more hands that would fit into the category of very strong hands:

64 AQJ864 AK AQ10

This hand is not as commanding as the example above, but it wouldn't take much from partner in order for you to take 10 tricks in hearts.

Sometimes the number of tricks you have cannot be counted, but your point count may be 22 HCPs, or even more:

AJ9 KQJ8 AQ43 AQ

Here are 23 HCPs in a hand that should bid notrump. But it is way too strong to open 1NT (15 to 17), and even too strong to open 2NT (20 to 21). It is exceptional.

Sometimes our exceptional hand may feature a minor suit:

K4 AQ AKJ109753 A

This is a very compelling hand, but what

should the contract be? Is 3NT the right destination, or should it be 5 or 6 diamonds, or perhaps even 7 diamonds? We need to be able to describe this sort of hand to partner so that the best destination can be reached together.

## How to open the bidding

Whenever you hold a hand of such exceptional strength, you open the bidding with the call of 2 clubs.

**The opening bid of 2 clubs is made with any hand of exceptional strength.**

Your opening bid of 2 clubs is an announcement. You are unmistakably stating that you hold an exceptional hand. You are advising partner to get the proper perspective in mind: YOU ARE STRONG!

In fact, your 2 club opening bid also poses a question to partner. It says, "do you have a trick?"

**The opening bid of 2 clubs asks partner if he has even just one trick.**

If partner does have a trick, we will always want to bid game. If partner doesn't have any tricks, we may still want to bid game, or perhaps not. So when we open 2 clubs to announce our strength and to ask partner if he has a trick, we are always quite attentive.

## How responder answers to 2 clubs

Partner's opening bid of 2 clubs announces a hand of exceptional strength and asks you if you have a trick. How do you know if you have a trick or not? Here is the guideline:

- **You have a trick if you have an ACE.**
- **You have a trick if you have a KING**
- **You have a trick if you have TWO QUEENS**

When you have an ace, a king, or even just two queens you NEED to give partner a positive response. Your hand may look very measly to you, but any high cards you have will complement partner's abundance, and partner will welcome your "measly" contribution with enthusiasm. Remember, partner has an exciting hand.

**If you have a trick for partner, you respond 2 diamonds.**

Your bid of 2 diamonds doesn't mean anything at all about diamonds. It just says that you have a trick.

**If your hand is so poor that you do not have any tricks, then you respond 2 hearts.**

Your bid of 2 hearts doesn't mean anything at all about hearts. It just means that you have no tricks, and partner will have to deal with this fact.

**The response of 2 diamonds is game forcing. The response of 2 hearts warns opener that responder may pass at his next turn.**

## When responder answers a suit

On occasion, not very often, responder will get to bid something other than 2 diamonds (positive) or 2 hearts (negative). Responder may, instead, actually bid a suit if that suit is 5 cards long or longer, AND IF it is headed by two of the top three honors.

AK9754 43 J96 65

If opener starts with 2 clubs, respond with a bid of 2 spades. You will be showing partner 5 spades headed by 2 of the top 3 honors.

43 J96 AK9754 65

Over 2 clubs, jump to 3 diamonds. You will be telling partner you have 5 or more diamonds headed by two of the top three honors.

43 J96 65 AK9754

Over 2 clubs, bid 3 clubs.

43 AK9754 65 J96

This hand is a problem. You have 6 hearts with two of the top three honors, but you can't bid 2 hearts, because 2 hearts is the negative response that says you have no tricks at all. The solution to this problem is that you bid 2NT. Your bid of 2NT means that you have 5 hearts headed by two of the top three honors.

These special bids do not come up very often. But when they do, they give opener a very clear picture of almost half of your entire hand.

## Opener's 2nd bid with notrump hands

Earlier we showed an exceptional notrump hand:

AJ9 KQJ8 AQ43 AQ

Opener starts with a bid of 2 clubs, announcing exceptional strength. Then, whether responder bids 2 diamonds or 2 hearts, opener rebids 2NT.

• 2 clubs followed by 2NT shows a balanced hand with 22 to 24 HCPs.

• 2 clubs followed by 3NT shows a balanced hand with 25 to 27 HCPs.

The most frequent type of notrump rebid by a 2 club opener is 2NT.

Over opener's rebid of 2NT, the notrump bidding system is ON.

- 3 clubs is Stayman
- 3 diamonds transfers to hearts
- 3 hearts transfers to spades

Over opener's rebid of 3NT, the notrump bidding system is ON.

- 4 clubs is Stayman
- 4 diamonds transfers to hearts
- 4 hearts transfers to spades.

## Opener's 2nd bid with suit hands

When your exceptional hand is balanced, you have a notrump rebid, as described above. When your hand is not balanced, you will have a 5-card suit. With this type of hand, instead of making your

2nd bid in notrump, you simply bid your suit.

If partner has 3 card support for your major suit, expect a raise. If, instead, partner bids a suit, it will nearly always be a 5-card suit.

In either case, when responder has bid 2 diamonds over your 2 club opening, then the auction is entirely GAME FORCING.

### Samples

You hold	K874	9765	82	765
pard	opp	you	opp	
2♣	P	2♦	P	
2NT	P	3♣	P	
3♥	P	4♥	all pass	

You hold	K87542	97	832	76
pard	opp	you	opp	
2♣	P	2♦	P	
3NT	P	4♥	P	
4♠	all pass			

You hold	7432	6	J8632	984
pard	opp	you	opp	
2♣	P	2♥	P	
2♠	P	4♠	P	
P	P			

With 4 trump, you and partner hold 9 or more trump. Partner will be able to trump hearts with your trump. You will be giving partner at least 1 ruffing trick, maybe 2. Over 2 clubs you had no tricks, but when partner bids spades, you do have tricks. Your hand has changed from a negative to a positive (but a weak positive.)

**Principle of fast arrival. In a game forcing auction, bidding quickly to a destination shows weakness. Bidding slowly to a destination shows strength.**

You hold K432 6 A8632 984

pard opp you opp

2♣ P 2♦ P

2♠ P 3♠ P

4NT (etc,)

Partner has asked you for only 1 trick, but you have at least 3, the king of spades, the ace of diamonds, and at least one heart ruff. With this much extra you do not jump to 4 spades, which would be fast arrival, signifying a weak positive. You have raised just to 3 spades, going slow in a game forcing auction. Going slowly shows that you have even more than partner has asked you for. Partner is continuing to bid because he thinks you may be able to make a slam.

You hold J5 AJ752 76 10843

pard opp you opp

2♣ P 2♦ P

3♦ P 3♥ P

4♥ all pass

Opener has shown a diamond suit, and you show you have 5 hearts. Opener raises you to game because he has 3 or more hearts.