

What's Standard?

by David Lindop

This series is based on *Grant Standard*, a set of conventions and agreements that are in popular use today, such as 15-17 INT openings, five-card majors, and weak two-bids. A summary chart of *Grant Standard* and the corresponding convention card can be found at www.AudreyGrant.com. The site also has *Grant Basic*, a simpler set of agreements.

Earlier articles in this series appeared in the *Bridge Bulletin* and can also be found under 'Articles' at www.AudreyGrant.com.

In the previous two issues we have been looking at the 2♣ opening bid and responses using Grant Standard. Here's a recap so far:

2♣ OPENING

Balanced hands of 22+ points, open 2♣ planning to rebid:

2NT 22-24 (non forcing)
3NT 25-27 (non forcing)

Unbalanced hands with about 9 or more playing tricks, open 2♣ and then bid the suit (forcing).

RESPONDING TO 2♣

2♦: artificial 'waiting' bid
2♥, 2♠, 3♣, 3♦: good five-card or longer suit, 8+ points.

2NT: balanced, 8+ points

After using the 2♦ response:

- If opener rebids in notrump, responder uses similar methods to those over opening notrump bids (Stayman, transfers)
- If opener rebids in a suit, responder's cheapest bid in a minor at the three level shows a weak hand (no ace or king).

Successfully handling strong hands is important for the partnership since there is usually a game or slam contract at stake. Let's look at some typical auctions using the Grant Standard methods.

The 2♣ Opening and Responses – Part III

Sample Auctions

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

East makes a waiting response of 2♦ and West's rebid shows a balanced hand of 22-24 points. This is a non-forcing rebid since it puts an upper limit on West's strength. With 1 point, East passes, knowing the partnership could have as few as 23 combined points and at most 25.

Although West has a maximum, it will be challenging to take even eight tricks. West has five sure tricks and can promote two more in diamonds but will need some luck to get one more. Perhaps West can develop an eighth trick in clubs if the missing clubs are divided 3-3.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

East again makes a waiting response of 2♦. With an unbalanced hand and two five-card suits, West rebids the higher-ranking first. East can't pass the 2♠ rebid since West's hand is unlimited in strength. To show a weak hand, responder now makes the artificial rebid of 3♣, the cheapest

minor suit at the three level. East can now show the second suit. The 3♥ bid is still forcing since the strength of West's hand is still unlimited. With a preference for hearts as the trump suit, East raises to game. West won't expect much from East because East's 3♣ bid showed a bad hand ... no ace or king and fewer than two queens. The partnership reaches the best game ...and may even make a slam if the missing hearts are divided 2-2.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

After East makes the artificial waiting bid, West shows the heart suit. East makes a negative rebid by bidding the cheapest minor at the three level. With only nine playing tricks, West rebids 3♥. This is not forcing and East can pass. This is the only sequence where the partnership can stop below the game level when the 2♣ opener shows an unbalanced hand.

Another Option for Responder

When the 2♣ opener shows an unbalanced hand, responder has another option other than bidding the cheapest minor at the three level to show a weak hand: a **jump raise to game shows four-card support for opener's suit but no aces, kings, singletons or voids**.

For example:

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♠	All Pass

With a weak hand, East starts with the 2♦ waiting response. When West shows a five-card or longer spade suit, East knows the partnership has a good trump fit, so there should probably be a good play for game even though East doesn't have much in the way of high cards. East describes this type of hand with a jump right to game.

Essentially, this bid says, "Okay, I've got support for your suit but I don't have anything that will be of much use if you are thinking about slam." That makes it easy for West to pass, knowing the partnership must be missing two aces. If West had used the Blackwood convention, the partnership would reach the five level and risk being defeated if the heart finesse doesn't work.

Stronger Auctions

The reason responder can jump to game with a fit and a weak hand is that the partnership doesn't need any bidding room when there is little prospect for a slam contract. It's when responder has a fit and some values that the partnership may need more room to explore for slam.

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

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

West opens 2♣ and East starts with the 2♦ waiting response. West shows the heart suit and East makes a simple raise to show support and some values. This commits the partnership to at least game and shows interest in slam. With a weak hand and no fit, East would have made the artificial negative rebid of 3♣.

With a weak hand and a fit, East would have jumped right to game.

East's raise encourages West to consider a slam. West doesn't want to use the Blackwood convention right away. If East were to show no aces, West still wouldn't know whether the partnership belonged in slam. East could have the ♣K and ♠Q, or the defenders might be able to take the first two club tricks.

So West takes it more slowly by showing values—cuebidding—in the spade suit. East cooperates by showing values in the club suit. Now West can afford to use Blackwood to check on aces. When East shows an ace, West can even consider a grand slam and ask about the number of kings East holds. When East shows only one king, West settles for a small slam.

The slam bidding process can be a little complex, but the important point is that the partnership can use the 2♣ opening and response structure to determine whether it is headed for the game or slam level.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♦	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♦	Pass
5NT	Pass	6♥	Pass
7♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

With a good five-card suit and 10 high-card points, East makes an immediate positive response over the 2♣ opening. West was planning to rebid 2NT to show a balanced hand with 22-24 points. With a great fit for spades, however, West prefers to agree on that suit as trumps. East's positive response has committed the partnership to at least game, so West only needs to raise to 3♠.

Having agreed on the trump suit, East can show some values in diamonds. That's enough for West

to launch into Blackwood. When East shows an ace, West tries for a grand slam by asking for kings. When East shows two kings, West goes for the grand slam.

West knows East has a five-card or longer spade suit headed by the ♠A-K. West also knows the partnership has the ♥A-K, ♦A-K, and ♣A-K-Q. That's twelve top tricks. A thirteenth should come from a diamond ruff in West's hand if East has three or more diamonds, or perhaps from the club suit if East has a doubleton diamond.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

East doesn't have enough to make an immediate positive response in hearts and starts with a waiting response of 2♦. West shows the long suit. Now East introduces the heart suit and, with a fit, West raises to game.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	Pass

East starts with a waiting response of 2♦ and West shows a balanced hand with 22-24 points. East can now use the Stayman convention to look for a major suit fit. The partnership uses the same methods it would use after a 2NT opening bid. In response to the 3♣ Stayman inquiry, West shows a four-card heart suit. East raises to game in the eight-card fit, knowing the partnership is unlikely to have enough combined strength for a slam contract. ♦