

What's Standard?

Grant Standard — by David Lindop



This is the third article discussing what is meant by “standard” when referring to modern bidding methods. The previous articles can be found at www.audreygrant.com.

The previous article discussed Grant Basic, a minimal set of agreements that can be used to compete in today's game. In summary, the main features are:

- Strong (15-17) 1NT
- Stayman
- Five-card majors
- Limit raises
- Weak two-bids
- Strong artificial 2♣ opening
- Blackwood and Gerber
- Negative doubles
- Preemptive bids in competition

Let's move on to Grant Standard, which adds some of the more popular modern conventions to this list. We still want to avoid too much memory work since it can take away from the enjoyment of the game for the majority of players. Nonetheless, regular club and tournament players are typically expected to be familiar with these conventions and they are often used on the Internet.

We'll start with opening bids, responses, and rebids—essentially the ‘front’ of the convention card—and leave competitive bidding and leads and signals until the next issue.

An Overview

The chart on the opposite page is a more detailed summary, but here are the features that have been added to Grant Basic:

- Jacoby transfers (extended)
- Jacoby 2NT
- Splinter raises
- Reverse Drury
- Second negative after 2♣
- Fourth suit forcing

Let's look at some of the reasons for these additions.

Jacoby Transfer Bids

When responding to partner's 1NT opening, Jacoby transfer bids are second in popularity to the Stayman convention among club and tournament players. They integrate nicely with Stayman and the basic mechanics are quite straightforward:

- 2♦ asks opener to bid 2♥
- 2♥ asks opener to bid 2♠

The disadvantage over the basic responses is that responder cannot sign off in 2♦ and the opponents have more opportunity to enter the auction. One compensation is that the 1NT opener—who usually holds the stronger hand—will become declarer in a major suit contract. That can make things more challenging for the defenders. It is also easier for responder to show an invitational-strength hand with a five-card major. Without transfers, responder has to go through the Stayman convention, leading to some awkward auctions. Another benefit is that it is usually easier for responder to show two-suited hands.

Note: A more detailed discussion of Jacoby transfer bids and the other ‘standard’ conventions will be left until the end of this series.

Whether the benefits of transfer bids outweigh the disadvantages is really a moot point. They are part of 21st century bidding and likely to be used in many more situations in the future. So, we might as well become familiar with them now.

Extended Transfers

Since the 2♠ response to 1NT is no longer needed as a signoff if transfers are used—responder can bid 2♥ to transfer to 2♠ and then pass—it can be put to better use. A common practice is to use extended transfers:

- 2♠ asks opener to bid 3♣

Responder can then pass to leave the partnership to play in 3♣ and bid 3♦ as a signoff in that suit.

This is a rather straightforward extension, so we'll include it here. It gives responder a way to sign off in a minor suit and has the side benefit of clarifying how responder deals with other hands with a long minor suit.

With a good six-card minor suit, such as ♣A-Q-10-8-7-5, but not quite enough strength to take the partnership to 3NT, responder can jump to 3♣ or 3♦ to invite opener to bid 3NT with a fit and stoppers in the other suits. Without a fit or lacking stoppers in the other suits, opener can pass and settle for partscore.

With a long minor suit and interest in slam, opener starts with the Stayman convention, 2♣, and then bids the minor suit. So, a response of 2♣ followed by 3♣, or 3♦, is forcing. It's important to have this agreement since there is sometimes confusion about whether 2♣ followed by 3♣ is responder's way of signing off in clubs with a weak hand.

A disadvantage of using extended transfers is that the strong hand is the dummy when responder signs off in diamonds. One way around this is to use four-suit transfers, where 2♠ is a transfer to clubs and 2NT is a transfer to diamonds. This approach has several advantages but it takes away the natural meaning of the 2NT response. That goes against our principle of trying to keep things simple and not having to ‘unlearn’ too much.

Handling Interference

If the 1NT opening is doubled, there is little reason not to continue to use Stayman and transfers. If there is an overcall of 2♣, transfers can still be used but it has become common practice to use a double of 2♣ as Stayman instead of a cuebid of 3♣.

If the overcall is 2♦ or higher, our agreement will be that transfers no longer apply and that a cuebid of the overcalled suit is used as Stayman, asking opener for a four-card major.

Jacoby 2NT

When using limit raises in response to an opening 1♥ or 1♠, responder needs a way to show a *forcing raise*—support and 13 or more dummy points. Since an immediate

raise to game is pre-emptive, the basic way to handle this is to bid a new suit and then raise opener's major to game. This makes it awkward to investigate slam, so Jacoby 2NT becomes a useful addition to our agreements.

A response of 2NT to an opening bid of 1♥ or 1♠ shows:

- four-card or longer support
- 13 or more dummy points

Opener then:

- bids a new suit at the three level to show a singleton or void
- jumps to the four level in a good five-card side suit
- jumps to 4♥/4♠ with no shortness and a minimum
- rebids 3♥/3♠ with no shortness and a maximum
- rebids 3NT with no shortness and a medium hand

So far, our agreements follow SAYC (Standard American Yellow Card) with minor exceptions—SAYC uses Jacoby 2NT with three-card support, for example. Now we're going to add some non-SAYC items.

Splinter Raises

In response to partner's opening bid, a double jump in a new suit—a jump to 4♦ in response to an opening bid of 1♠, for example—has

little value as a natural call. Instead, the modern style is to use this to show four-card or longer support for partner's suit, a singleton or void in the bid suit, and enough strength to take the partnership to game.

This is similar to Jacoby 2NT, except that it *shows* shortness instead of asking about partner's shortness. Once the partnership learns how to value shortness when assessing slam possibilities—

which is a fundamental part of Jacoby 2NT—it might as well use this idea in other situations.

Splinter raises can be used by both opener and responder and will be discussed in more detail later.

Reverse Drury

Jacoby 2NT isn't used once responder passes initially. Responder's hand seldom revalues to 13 or more points and slam prospects are rare. There is a different challenge, however.

It's common practice to occasionally open light in third or fourth position, sometimes with only a four-card major for lead-directing purposes. Also, a *new suit by responder is no longer forcing*. So, with support for opener's major and a hand of invitational strength, responder doesn't want to make a jump raise and get the partnership too high or bid a new suit and risk missing the major suit fit.

To get around this, it's become popular to use a response of 2♣ as artificial, asking whether opener has a full opening bid. The modern style is to have opener rebid the major, 2♥ or 2♠, with a light opening. Any other rebid shows full opening values. This is referred to as Reverse Drury.

(to be continued)

GENERAL APPROACH: GRANT STANDARD	
OPENING BIDS	RESPONSES
1NT: 14+ to 17 (can include 5-card major) (responses remain same if 1NT is doubled; responses remain same after 2♣ overcall except double is now Stayman; transfers off after 2♦ or higher overcall & cuebid is Stayman)	2♣: Stayman 2♦: 5+ hearts (transfer) 2♥: 5+ spades (transfer) 2♠: transfer to 3♣ (to sign off in clubs or diamonds) 3♣/3♦: 6+ suit; invit. to 3NT 3♥/3♠: Forcing; invit. to slam
2NT: 20 to 21 (with 22-24 open 2♣ and rebid 2NT) (with 25-27 open 2♣ and rebid 3NT)	3♣: Stayman 3♦: Transfer to hearts 3♥: Transfer to spades (Stayman and transfers also apply after 2♣-2♦-2NT/3NT)
1♥/1♠: 1st/2nd: 5+ cards 3rd/4th: 5+ cards (occasionally four cards)	new suit response: forcing 3♥/3♠: 10/11-12; invit. to game 2NT: 13+; forcing raise (Jacoby) double jump in new suit: splinter raise new suit: not forcing (except 2♣) 2♣: 3+ card support (Reverse Drury)
1♣/1♦: 1st/2nd: 3+ cards 3rd/4th: 3+ cards	new suit response: forcing jump raise (3♣/3♦): invit. to game 1NT: 6-10; 2NT: 11-12; 3NT: 13-15 (no four-card or longer major) new suit response: non forcing
2♣: 22+ if balanced; 9+ tricks if unbalanced	2♦: waiting cheaper of 3♣/3♦ second negative
2♦/2♥/2♠: 5-11; good 6-card suit (usually)	2NT or new suit: forcing raise: signoff
3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠: preemptive; good 7-card suit (usually)	new suit: forcing raise: signoff
SLAM AGREEMENTS	
4♣: Gerber (after natural 1NT/2NT) 4NT: Blackwood (after suit agreed)	4♦: 0/4 aces; 4♥: 1; 4♠: 2; 4N: 3 5♣: 0/4 aces; 5♦: 1; 5♥: 2; 5♠: 3
OTHER AGREEMENTS	
Fourth suit forcing to game	