

## Jacoby 2NT -- Forcing Major Suit Raise

Playing a Standard American bidding system, you have three direct ways to show trump support after partner opens 1♥ or 1♠:

1. A simple raise to two (1♠-2♠), to show 6-9 pts.
2. A jump to three (1♠-3♠), which can be played either of two ways, depending on your preference: as a *forcing raise* (13+ pts.), or as an invitational *limit raise* (10-12 pts.).
3. A jump to game (1♠-4♠), to show limited high-card points (usually about less than 7HCP), but great trump length and playing strength.

If you play the more modern system of using the jump to 3 as a limit raise, you have a somewhat awkward problem when you hold a forcing-to-game hand with trump support. One solution is to bid a new suit first, temporarily "concealing" your support, then jump to game in partner's suit at your next turn (an auction like 1♠ by partner - 2♣ by you - 2NT - 4♠).

There are a number of different conventions designed to help you describe these strong hands. One of the most popular is the Jacoby 2NT, which was invented by Oswald Jacoby (who also invented Jacoby Transfers). To use this convention, your partnership agrees that after you open 1♥ or 1♠ and your partner is an *unpassed hand*, her jump to 2NT shows:

- Forcing-to-game strength (12+ points)
- Good trump support (4 or more cards)

The 2NT response forces you to at least game level. It is not a suggestion to play in notrump; it shows support and asks the 1♥ or 1♠ opener to further describe his hand. Note that the Jacoby 2NT convention is "on" only if responder has not previously passed in the auction. If you're a passed hand, a jump to 2NT is natural, showing a balanced hand, 11-12 points. Note\* If RHO interferes in the auction 2NT becomes natural again.

### Opener's Rebids

In addition to giving responder a direct way to show a forcing hand, the Jacoby 2NT improves the accuracy of your slam bidding. Its biggest advantage is that it gives opener room to further describe his hand. There are a number of different meanings you can assign to opener's rebids. Here's one of the most commonly used structures:

#### If you open One of a major and partner responds 2NT:

- If you have a second 5-card suit (a semi-strong one – QJ10xx or better), show it by jumping to four of the suit.
- With any other hand that has a singleton or void, bid three of that short suit.
- If you have extra values (but no singleton or void), describe your strength and pattern by rebidding 3NT extra values but not so good trumps *or* three of your suit with extra values and good trumps.
- If you have a minimum opener with no singleton or void, jump to 4 of your suit. This is your weakest rebid. It shows a fairly balanced hand with no interest in slam.

For example, after you open 1♠ and partner responds 2NT, the meanings of your rebids are:

- 3♣, 3♦ or 3♥ = Singleton or void in that suit.
- 3S = extra values with good trumps (or unexpected trump length) and no singleton.
- 3NT = Extra values, and not so good trumps.
- 4♣, 4♦, 4♥ = Decent 5-card side suit (QJ10xx or better).
- 4S = Minimum hand (12-14 pts.), no singleton.

Once responder has this information, she can decide how to proceed. If she's not interested in a slam, she can just jump to game. If she wants to explore further, she can cue-bid a new suit to show an ace. This requests opener to cue-bid an ace.

### Jacoby 2NT in Action:

(1)	♠KJ832	♠A10764
	♥A65	♥KQ5
	♦10	♦872
	♣A954	♣K7

<u>Opener</u>	<u>Responder</u>
1♠	2NT
3♦	4NT
5♥	6♠

After responder bids Jacoby 2NT, opener bids 3♦ to show his shortage. This is encouraging news for responder because it means his three losing diamonds are no longer a worry opposite a singleton. And her club and heart honors should fit well in partner's hand. Hence, knowing that her ♦872 suit is covered by opener's singleton -- and that opener's outside strength must be in clubs and/or hearts -- responder bids Blackwood to check on aces, to find this 24-point slam.

Note that responder would evaluate her hand very differently if opener's answer to the Jacoby 2NT had been 3♣ or 3♥. Singletons in these suits wouldn't be helpful because responder's kings may well be "wasted" cards opposite the singleton. Over opener's 3♣ rebid, responder would settle into 4♠ to show that she no longer has interest in slam.

(2)	♠KJ10543	♠AQ72
	♥AKJ	♥105
	♦32	♦KQ54
	♣K9	♣A62

<u>Opener</u>	<u>Responder</u>
1♠	2NT
3♠	4♣
4♥	6♠

Opener's 3♠ rebid denies a singleton, but promises extra values and good trumps. Responder shows slam interest by cue-bidding his ♣A and opener cooperates by cue-bidding 4♥. This shows the heart ace and denies the ♦A (since he'll cue-bid his cheapest ace). Responder now knows that the partnership has extra values, control of every suit and exactly three aces. Since he doesn't need to use Blackwood (a grand slam is out of the question), he jumps to 6♠.

## Fourth Suit Forcing (4SF)

1.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1♠	3♣

2.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1♠	3♠

3.

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
2♣	3♣

4.

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
2♣	3♥

With all the above auctions, Responder's second bid is not a forcing bid. In most cases it is a jump – but in each case – responder's second bid is in support of one of opener's suit. These are limit bids showing 11-12ish points. Limit bids are good bids and allows a player to do just as she has: (show support - while limiting her hand). With Auction 4 above: I play that the delayed jump bid in support of hearts shows 3-card support and a limit raise. With 4-card support and a limit raise I would have jump raised partner at my first bid. All limiting bids can be passed.

But this begs the question: "How can I force opener to bid again?" There is a clever convention:

### FOURTH SUIT FORCING (4SF)

You rarely want to play in a fourth suit, so why not use it as a conventional bid saying to partner:

"I want to be in game – can you tell me more about your hand?"

So, after 3 natural suit bids - a bid of the 4<sup>th</sup> suit is forcing and artificial. It says nothing about your holding in the 4<sup>th</sup> suit. It just says you want to be in at least game and need more information. It will facilitate a lot of hands where you would otherwise have difficulty bidding it accurately.

Sitting South you hold:

Hand 1
♠ K J 10 6 3
♥ K 5
♦ 9 8 7
♣ A K 2

Auction	North	East	You	West
	1♥	pass	1♠	pass
	2♣	pass	?	

What do you now bid? You want to be in game (after partner opens) but there is no convenient bid.

Options are:

- 2NT      You do not have a stopper in the unbid suit (diamonds) plus this only promises 10-12.
- 3♣      This shows 4-card support and 10-12 points. You have 13+ and only 3-card club support.
- 3♥      Shows 3-card support and 10-12 points.
- 3♠      Shows a 6-card suit and again only 10-12 points.
- 3NT      Promises a stopper in diamonds. The opponents will surely lead a diamond!

The first 4 bids can all be passed and the last bid is a lie – as you have no diamond stopper.

As you can see it is impossible to bid this hand accurately. The only way to handle such a hand is with a convention called **Fourth Suit Forcing**. Bid 2♦ (the fourth suit) which says nothing at all about diamonds but is forcing and tells partner “I want to be in game, tell me more about your hand....”. What it does do, is it slows the auction down allowing room to communicate further.

Opener has the following options available:

- With 3-card spade support, she can bid 2♠.
- If she has a diamond stopper, she can bid 2NT. (denies three-card spade support)
- With five clubs she can bid 3♣ (showing 5-5 in the minors)
- She might have to re-bid hearts with a five-card suit if fixed for a bid.

### Did you Know

That in the auction 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠, 1♠ is a natural bid showing spades.  
To bid 4SF - you must jump to 2♠ on this auction.

<p><b>Hand 2</b></p> <p>♠ K 9 7</p> <p>♥ Q J 10 9 3</p> <p>♦ 7 6</p> <p>♣ A K 4</p>
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West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♥
pass	1♠	pass	?
Sitting in the South chair - what is your second bid?			
You have game values – but no good re-bid. Unless you play 4SF!			

If so – then you can bid 2♦ 4SF to game. Opener’s next bid should offer more clarity.

If opener bids 2♥ showing 3-card support – you can bid 4♥.

If opener bids 2NT showing a stopper in diamonds – you can bid 3NT.

If opener bids 3♣ showing a 6-card suit – you are not pleased but can bid 3♥ (remember 4SF is forcing to game so partner cannot pass) giving partner one more chance to bid 3NT if holding something like: ♠A863 ♥84 ♦A ♣QJ10973.

One huge advantage of 4SF is that it slows down the auction and neither player can pass until a game contract has been reached. On the above hand – in a pinch we could play in 4♥ on a 5-2 fit or in 5♣ - requiring 11 tricks. Not a perfect world but we are doing everything we can to find a heart fit or a stopper in diamonds - to play 3NT.

<p><b>Hand 3</b></p> <p>♠ 2</p> <p>♥ A J 8 6 3</p> <p>♦ K 10 7 4 2</p> <p>♣ 7 6</p>
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West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♥
pass	1♠	pass	?
You certainly cannot pass 1♠. And you are not strong enough to bid 2♦ 4SF. (On this auction - 2♦ is no longer a natural bid). This is what we give up in order to add the power of 4SF to our arsenal.			

With 2♣ Stayman we also give up a regular club bid to add the power of Stayman to our arsenal. Such it is with 4SF and many other conventions. With **Hand 3** you will have to bid 1NT or 2♥. Because - as already stated – you cannot pass 1♠.

## How Do I Show a Suit That Would Otherwise be 4SF?

Hand 4
♠ 5
♥ A Q 7 6 3
♦ A K J 3 2
♣ 5 2

West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♥
pass	1♠	pass	?

If you want to bid 3NT (you do have a stopper in the unbid suit) go ahead. However, I do not feel comfortable doing so with this 5-5 hand. So, I would bid 2♦ (4SF) going slowly and see what partner has to say next.

If she bids 2♥ (showing 3-card support) I will settle into 4♥ and keep my diamonds a secret from the opponents.

If she bids 3♣ I will now bid 3♦ natural (showing a genuine diamond holding)

If she bids 2NT (showing a diamond stopper) I will bid 3♦ natural to get yet another bid out of my partner. (Remember\* 4<sup>th</sup> suit is forcing to game).

If she bids 3♠ showing 5-spades (some players open 1♣ when 5-5 in the black suits) Okay, then I will bid 3NT.

### Is 4SF Always Forcing to Game?

This depends on partnership agreement. Some play it as only forcing for one round. There are benefits both ways. However, I prefer it to be forcing to game. The fact that it is forcing to game is - I think - one of the more dynamic components of 4SF. The auction can slow down to a snail's pace because both partner and I know we are headed to game and neither of us can pass until a game contract has been achieved.

This is such a powerful weapon I rate it as my 2<sup>nd</sup> favourite convention of all time. I would not want to leave home without it.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

If the opponents intervene – 4SF is off? The whole dynamics of the bidding change – and it can get complicated once they are in the auction. Even if they make a take-out double. So, lets agree now: If the opponents compete in the auction – 4SF is of the table.

# Combining Chances

## First: Declarer Play Tips

Below is a simple list of suggestions that might help to improve your general standard and speed of card play. Many of the maxims may seem rather obvious, but it amazing how even experienced players can either forget or ignore them on some occasions.

1. Before playing to trick one, count your tricks. What are your options!
2. If the required tricks are not available, consider which suits should be developed in order to create these tricks.
3. Identify potential danger situations. If you have a choice [like taking a finesse either way], ensure that you take it into the hand than can pose you the least danger.
4. When playing in no trump, tend to focus on establishing long suits first.
5. In no trump - pay particular attention to ensuring that you have an appropriate entry to the hands from which you can enjoy established tricks in your long suits.
6. Sometimes, opportunities exist for more advanced plays: a) Loser on loser – rather than trumping a trick, discard a known loser. This may help create more tricks later on. b) ‘End-playing’ an opponent, such that they are forced to lead away from a holding which favours you. c) Squeezing your opponent. (Playing off long suits [including trumps] so that your opponents are forced to discard and possibly bare key cards in other suits, which you can then exploit).

## Second: Defining Two Finesses

### 1. Direct finesse

A direct finesse is a finesse that gains a trick without losing one, as long as it is "on".  
For example:

♠ A Q                      If S (declarer) is on lead she can lead to the ♠Q; that is, she leads a small spade and, if W plays low, plays the ♠Q from dummy. If W is holding the ♠K (it is "onside"), N-S will win two tricks, for a gain of one trick without losing a trick. (If W actually plays the ♠K on the first trick, of course, N-S win two tricks by covering with the ace. If E holds the king (darn) - then move quickly onto the next hand.

♠ 7 2

### 2. Indirect finesse

An indirect finesse is a finesse that gains a trick - if it is on - but involves usually losing a trick regardless if the finesse loses or wins. A typical example is:

♠ Q 4 2                      S leads a small spade toward the ♠Q; if W holds the ♠K and plays small, the ♠Q will win the current trick. If W wins her ♠K now, then she will be promoted to a trick. If E holds the ♠K – on to the next hand!

♠ A 6 3

## Third: Six Hands - Each with Three Chances

As South, you should find *three chances* to make each of the six contracts. What are they, which will you try first, and which will you try next?

1. 3NT by South: You have eight sure tricks with three chances to get the ninth.

Lead: ♥3	♠ A Q 5 4 3	What is one chance? _____
	♥ J 7 2	What is another? _____
	♦ 2	And the third? _____
	♣ Q 5 4 3	Which will you try first? _____
	♠ 6	Which will you try next? _____
	♥ A K 4	
	♦ K 10 9 5	
	♣ A K J 8 6	

2. 3NT by South: You have eight sure tricks with three chances to get the ninth.

Lead: ♦7	♠ A 4	What is one chance? _____
	♥ A 7 5 3 2	What is another? _____
	♦ 5 4	And the third? _____
	♣ 6 5 3 2	Which will you try first? _____
	♠ K J 3 2	Which will you try next? _____
	♥ K 4	
	♦ A Q 2	
	♣ A K 7 4	

3. 4♠ by South: You have 4 losers and will need to dispose one of them.

Lead: ♣J	♠ K 6 4	What is one chance? _____
	♥ A 3 2	What is another? _____
	♦ A K 2	And the third? _____
	♣ Q 4 3 2	Which will you try first? _____
	♠ Q J 10 9 8 7	Which will you try next? _____
	♥ J 10 9	
	♦ J 5 3	
	♣ A	

4. 4♠ by South: You have 4 possible losers and will need to get rid of one.

<i>Lead: ♣Q</i>	♠7 5 2 ♥A Q 5 4 ♦Q 8 4 ♣5 4 3  ♠A K 8 6 4 3 ♥3 2 ♦A 3 ♣A K 7
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What is one chance? \_\_\_\_\_

What is another? \_\_\_\_\_

What is another? \_\_\_\_\_

Which will you try first? \_\_\_\_\_

Which will you try next? \_\_\_\_\_

5. 6NT by South: You have 11 certain tricks with three chances to get the 12<sup>th</sup>.

<i>Lead: ♠Q</i>	♠7 6 5 4 ♥A J 10 9 ♦3 ♣A K 3 2  ♠A K 3 ♥K Q 2 ♦A K J 4 ♣Q 5 4
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What is one chance? \_\_\_\_\_

What is another? \_\_\_\_\_

What is another? \_\_\_\_\_

Which will you try first? \_\_\_\_\_

Which will you try next? \_\_\_\_\_

6. 7♠ by South: You can afford no losers yet you have a club to lose! Where will you dispose of it?

<i>Lead: ♠9</i>	♠2 ♥A 8 6 4 2 ♦A K Q 4 ♣Q J 10  ♠A K Q J 10 7 6 ♥5 ♦7 6 3 ♣A 2
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What is one chance? \_\_\_\_\_

What is another? \_\_\_\_\_

What is another? \_\_\_\_\_

Which will you try first? \_\_\_\_\_

Which will you try next? \_\_\_\_\_



# COUNTING

## Count from the Bidding

Use their bidding to get a count on a suit. For example, say the bidding goes:

West	North	East	(You) South
1♠	pass	2♠	3♥
All pass			

You play the contract in 3♥ and when dummy comes down you can see that dummy has 3 spades and you have two spades in your hand for a total of 5 spades. That means the opponents have 8 spades and based on the bidding, **W** has 5 of them and **E** has three. You have a count on the spade suit and need only to get a count on two more suits! (And you haven't even started playing the hand yet!!)

NOTE: To make counting even easier, hone in on the hand that has shown length in a suit. It is easier to count their hand as you already have information about their length in one suit.

Pre-empt by the opponents are wonderful for giving you a count on the hand.

West	North	East	(You) South
2♥*	Dbl.	pass	2♠
All pass			

\*Weak Two

You already know that **W** has probably has a 6-card heart suit. This reveals how many hearts **E** is likely to hold. There are only 7 more cards in their hand that you need to know about.

## Inferential Count

West	North	East	(You) South
1♦	pass	1♠	2♣
pass	3♣	All pass	

This one is a bit tougher as it requires you to put your thinking cap on. Say a spade is led against your 3♣ contract and dummy comes down with ♥63 and you hold the ♥Q74. You can infer that the missing hearts are 4-4 as the opponents did not bid hearts and they have 8 of them. Hence, if **E** has four hearts he must have at least 5 spades. If **E** held 4-4 in the majors he would have bid 1♥ first! For the purpose of counting, count the **E** hand as he already has 9 known cards (5 spades and four hearts)!

## Inferring Count from the Lead

West	North	East	(You) South
1♦	pass	1♥	2♣
All pass			

Against your 2♣ contract, **W** leads the ♥9 and this is your heart holding.

♥ A87



**You**

♥ 1064

What can you infer about the outstanding hearts based on the bidding and the lead of the ♥9? It looks like a doubleton or a singleton. Which is more likely. It appears to me to be a doubleton. Surely if **E** held ♥KQJ532 she would have rebid her hearts instead of passing 2♣. So, infer that **W** has a doubleton heart and **E** only a 5-card suit. Your count of this hand is off and running. Don't forget, just count the **E** hand as she is the one with the long suit.

## Waiting to Make Your Move

♣ K1054

(a) ♣ 873

(b) ♣ J873



(a) ♣ J92

(b) ♣ 92

**You**

♣ AQ6

Say you need to take four club tricks if you are to make your contract. If the clubs are divided as in (a) then you need to cash your ♣A and ♣Q and then lead the ♣6 to dummy's ♣K dropping the ♣J. However, if they are divided as in (b) then you need to cash the ♣A and ♣Q and then lead the ♣6 and finesse dummy's ♣10. How are you to know which line of play to take?

## Thinking Clearly

### Inferences from the Bidding:

- **The Ace/King Inference:** Let's say that the opponents are playing in a diamond contract. Partner leads the ♥2 and dummy comes down. You note that both the ♥A and ♥K are not in dummy nor are they in your hand. You can assume that partner does not have both of these cards as she would have led the ♥A if she held both of these cards. You can make a similar inference if the ♥K and ♥Q are missing and partner leads a small one against a suit contract.
- **The Pre-emptive Inference:** Another example of making a logical inference from the lead is when someone has pre-empted at the three level. Say your partner bids 3♥ pre-emptive. Most pre-emptive bids (especially at the three level or higher) usually have a singleton in the hand. Generally, these singletons are led promptly in the hope of getting a ruff. If partner does have a singleton but doesn't lead it, then the singleton (if they have one) is most likely in the trump suit.
- **Inference When Partner Didn't Lead Your Suit:** If you have bid a suit and partner has supported your suit but didn't lead your suit, you might make the assumption that partner had the Ace of your suit and didn't want to lead away from her Ace or perhaps partner has a sequence in another suit or partner may have lead a singleton with hopes of getting you on lead later to give her a ruff.

\*Note that the above are all inferences. We are constantly making inferences when playing bridge. The more logical the inferences, the more likely it will be that you have assumed correctly.

**Inferences** are the backbone of card play at the bridge table whether it be as declarer or as defender. Inferences can be made from the lead, the play of the cards or from the bidding. By starting now to make inferences you will become a better player. Do not be discouraged if your inferences are wrong. There are a lot of bad leads, bad card plays and bad bidding which will pull the rug from under many of your well thought out inferences. Keep your head about you and continue making inferences. The better the opponents, the more likely your inferences are to be right.