



# Ask Jerry

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Dear Jerry,

Is there a difference between opening 3NT and opening 2♣ and then rebidding 3NT?

Arnie

Hi Arnie,

A reasonable goal for an established partnership is to avoid having two bids to describe the same hand type. I suggest that all strong balanced hands be described via a 2♣ opening followed by a notrump rebid. This releases the opening bid of 3NT to mean something different. Options selected by many players include:

1. Gambling. Typically a solid seven-card minor suit. Depending on partnership agreement, the 3NT bid could deny or guarantee an outside ace or king.
2. Four-level minor-suit preempt. This option is often chosen by fans of the Namyats convention, who use opening bids of 4♣ and 4♦ to show strong single-suited hands in hearts and spades, respectively.
3. 5-6 or 6-5 in the minors, preemptive.

There are other possible meanings, but I suggest you pick one that makes sense to you, then hope it comes up and hope that you and your partner remember what you decided!

Dear Jerry,

My partner opened 2♣ and right-hand opponent overcalled 2♦. I held:

♠J863 ♥AJ7 ♦J62 ♣1074.

What was my bid? Since I held values, the only thing I could think of was to bid 2♠, but in my heart, I did not really think that was best. My worst fears were confirmed when partner now bid Blackwood, followed by 7NT. Her hand was:

♠AK72 ♥5 ♦A ♣AKQJ863.

Fortunately, the ♠Q was doubleton, so everything worked out perfectly. What bid would you recommend?

Coral Bay Cindy

Dear Cindy,

My best guess is that many players are not on firm ground after interference to a 2♣ opening bid. As always, partnership agreement is the most important thing, and any agreement is superior to no agreement. My personal preference:

Pass: Neutral, game forcing. This would suggest 4 or more high-card points and tend to deny a good five-card or longer suit.

Double: Artificial, the most negative possible action. Usually 0-3 HCP. Opener is now forewarned that you have a bad hand. Despite this,

responder must take a second bid if opener introduces a suit. Responder can pass any notrump or game rebid.

New Suit: Game forcing, five-card or longer suit, headed by at least a queen. I am a bit more restrictive about suit quality in non-competitive auctions, but once the opponents are involved, it is best to start bidding your suits when holding reasonable values.

With the hand you actually held, pass would be the recommended action. Note that if you actually held five or more spades headed by the queen, your partner's 7NT would have been far more reasonable. It is, however, difficult to quarrel with success, and pass may well have kept you out of the cold grand slam! □