

What's the Difference Between

2H by RHO (Right Hand Opponent)

a) 2S by you next

b) 3S by you next

c) Double by you first followed by you bidding Spades next

We must not ever use two different bids to have the same meaning. Each meaning must be different.

a) You can overcall 2S with anywhere from 13-17 points including distribution and decent five-card or longer suit. 2H by RHO and you have:

S AKxxx

H Ax

D Kxx

C xxx

It does show a minimum of an opening bid when you overcall after a preempt.

b) There is a fine line between b) and c) 2H by RHO and you have:

S AQJxxxx

H x

D AKx

C Kx

With such solidity in the Spade suit, and SIX cards or longer, you can overcall 3S instead of doubling and then bidding Spades. But you must agree on this with partner.

If 2D by RHO and you have

S Axx

H KQJ10xx

D x

C AKx

Bid 3H here. Once again, a reminder to discuss this with partner as some players agree to play this auction as preemptive. But we prefer this method and this is the commonest approach used.

c) If you have 18 or more points and five or more Spades, your hand is too good to just overcall Spades.

It is the same as if it goes 1H on your right and you have:

S AQJxx

H xx

D AKxx

C Ax

If you merely overcall 1S, you are showing 8-17 points, including distribution. So you double first and then bid Spades at your cheapest level.

In the same way, if you have the same hand

S AQJxx

H xx

D AKxx

C Ax

and your RHO (Right Hand Opponent) opens 2H, you must double and if partner bids 3C, now you bid 3S. This shows 18-20 points and a five-card or longer Spade suit.

Here is a hand by Eddie Kantar to illustrate c) Double then bid your suit.

	North S KQ4 H 982 D 84 C Q10987		
West S 875 H 764 D Q10652 C J4		East S 62 H AKQ53 D 93 C K632	
	South S AJ1093 H J10 D AKJ7 C A5		
East	South	West	North
1H	Double	Pass	2C
Pass	2S	Pass	3S
Pass	4S	All Pass	

Bidding Commentary: As South, with a doubleton in the opener's suit, your takeout double followed by a new suit bid shows 18 or more points (don't count the HJ). If your hand is not strong enough to meet these requirements, just overcall. As North, you have enough to boost partner to 3S. Your hand has improved on the bidding and partner is sitting over there with some 18+ points. You are an eyelash away from raising to 4S. As East, you are not strong enough to rebid 2H with only five hearts not to mention a minimum opening, not to mention a silent partner.

Lead Commentary: With three small in partner's suit which you have NOT supported, lead low. With three small in partner's suit which you HAVE supported, lead high(top of nothing).

Play Commentary: As South, if the defense starts with three rounds of hearts, trump low. West has shown three hearts by leading low-high. Pay attention to the second card the opening leader plays after having led partner's unsupported suit. There's a world of difference between high-low and low-high.

Play Commentary #2. As South, the plan is to ruff two diamonds in dummy with high trumps. After trumping the third heart, play the AK and ruff a diamond high. If the queen has not appeared, cross to the CA and ruff the DJ high. You remain with four high trumps and a losing club. Making four.

Defensive Commentary: As East, if the CQ is led from dummy, cover. If a low club is led, play low.

BALANCING

A new, FREE video by Barbara for you: 25 mins.

<https://youtu.be/ELWyECI-AHU>

In this video, we review the concept of balancing in bridge, which involves distinguishing between the direct seat and the balancing seat. When in the balancing seat (if by passing, the auction would now be all over, you are in balancing seat or pass out seat) ... you should overbid by three points to prevent opponents from easily securing a low contract.

The key here is to push opponents to higher contract levels, making it tougher for them to succeed. OR try to buy the contract for our side. We delve into when and how to overcall or double based on our point count, and how our partner should respond in this case, after balancing has occurred.

Finally, there is a specific hand to demonstrate it all. You'll learn different plays and strategies to stop them in their tracks and prevent them from making their contract. It's all about being proactive and messing up their plans!

Bridge Bees: Marti's Mutterings.
Here is a sample hand below.

On Bridge Bee, you actually do the bidding and the play. If you pick the wrong card, or make the wrong bid, you are gently guided to choose another bid/card.

	North S 432 H 432 D 5432 C 432	
West S 98 H J1076 D 876 C QJ109		East S QJ10 H 98 D QJ105 C 8765
BIDDING NS only 2 C - 2D 2 S - 4S 6S	South S AK765 H AKQ5 D AK C AK	

Some of you may have chosen to bid 3C as the North player, showing a second negative. We believe that shows no fit for partner's major. Hence the bidding that did take place.

So, what is the plan when West leads the C Queen?

South is Declarer in 4S and counts her losers. South has definitely got ONE Spade loser. How about Hearts. Just cuz they are pretty, do not think that you do not have a loser there. After all, with 7 cards in the combined hands, you are missing 6 and the odds are that these will divide 4-2 most of the time.

So, since you have two losers and are only allowed one, you will have to plan on trumping a losing Heart in Dummy. This is a little tricky.

Win the Club lead and lead S A and K ONLY. Everyone follows and you only have one outstanding trump AND it is the boss trump so most of the time, you do not "pull it" as you do not want to use up two of your trumps to get only one of their WHEN theirs is the BOSS or MASTER trump.

Now you lead Hearts. East ruffs the third Heart. That is their only trick. Now, as soon as you win the lead, you lead your final Heart and ruff it in Dummy. "The rest are mine."

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ALEX'S BRIDGE TIPS

I get a lot of emails asking about 1NT forcing and semi-forcing and what it all means.

If you play Two Over One, you are already playing one of the above and even if you do not play Two Over One, then it is important that you know what the words mean so that when you are playing against a pair who announces one of these bids, you are clued in as to what these bids mean.

Let's start with 1NT Forcing.

Let's say you have this hand and partner opens with 1S.

S x
H Axx
D KJx
C Kxxxxx

You have 11 HCP (High Card points). You may say...but I have two length points for my long Clubs. You did. BUT your partner just opened with 1S. So now you have to subtract two length points because your hand is flawed. You are depressed and unhappy and your hand has decreased in value. Back to 11.

If you are playing Standard American, you will bid 2C with the above hand when partner opens 1S. This shows 10 or more points (could be anywhere up to 20 or more!) and four or more Clubs.

But if you are playing Two Over One, this means that when the bidding goes

1S - 2C
or
1S - 2D
or
1S - 2H
or
1H - 2C
or
1H - 2D
or
1D - 2C

that you as Responder promise to have 13 or more points.

It does NOT mean that when you have 13 points, you always have to make a Two Over One bid.

The bidding, for example may go: 1H by partner and you have:

S AQxx
H xx
D AKxx
C xxx

Partner opens 1H and you have the hand above. You must bid 1S, because with four card suits, you respond showing your suits UP THE LADDER. i.e. You don't suddenly bid 2D instead of 1S, just to show that you have 13 or more points. So your 1S bid does not deny having 13 or more points. You can go a whole session without ever having an actual Two Over One bid. For that matter, you can go a whole week without having one!!

Back to that earlier hand.

S x
H Axx
D KJx
C Kxxxxx

Partner opens 1S, you will have to bid 1NT. In fact, any time you are wanting to make a Two Over One bid and you do not have 13 or more points, you have to bid 1NT.

Over 1C or 1D though

1 of a minor - 1 NT = 6-10 HCP and no 4-card major
1 of a minor - 2 NT = 11-12 HCP and no 4-card major
1 of a minor - 3NT = 13-15 HCP and no 4-card major

So, what is different now is that the 1NT range which used to be 6-9 (in Standard), is now actually 6-12 points if you are playing Two Over One.

Because 6-12 points is such a big range, it is now going to be FORCING on the opening bidder to bid again.

Hence the words: FORCING NO TRUMP.

Got it?

Okay but the 1NT being forcing is not without one big pitfall.

If the Opening bidder has

S AJxxx
H Qxx
D Kx
C Kxx

He opens 1S and hears 1NT from partner. They are playing Forcing NT. This opener now must bid again. Yes, but what?

After 1S - 1NT, bidding 2S guarantees a six-card suit.

He cannot bid 2NT as this will promise 18-19 HCP (YES! It does! Remember that Responder could have only 6 points.)

So Opener must now bid 2C. (Even if his Clubs are 765). This is based on the premise that it is okay to lie about a minor but never lie about a major.

The sad part is that this Opening bidder really wanted to PASS 1NT with his flat minimum. AND Playing Forcing NT, he cannot pass, so the auction becomes awkward. Sometimes, playing in 1NT is the best spot.

And so, along comes the SEMI-FORCING NT. **If you and partner have agreed to play SEMI-FORCING NT**, then with the hand above:

S AJxxx
H Qxx
D Kx
C Kxx

1S by you, 1NT by partner, you can now pass. The 1NT response still shows 6-12 points (including distribution). But with a flat minimum, opener can pass.

But let's say opener has this hand:

S Kxx
H AQxxx
D KJxx
C x

1H - 1NT (semi-forcing)

2D is Opener's next bid, NOT pass. Opener only passes the semi-forcing NT if he is balanced and has no comfortable rebid.

A reminder that 1D - 1NT is NOT ever Forcing and only ever shows 6-10 HCP. The Forcing NT (or semi-forcing) only exists after 1 of a major opening.

If you are a passed hand,

Pass-Pass-1S - Pass

1NT is always semi-forcing now (playing Two Over One).
Because a passed hand can never force.

RESPONDING TO PARTNER'S 1NT OPENING BID WITH SHAPELY MAJORS by Barbara

What do you respond to partner's 1NT opener when you are 5-4 in the majors?

With this hand: # 1

S AQxxx

H KJxx

D xxx

C x

1NT - 2C

2D - 3S

will show 10+ HCP and five Spades and four Hearts. Because with only five Spades and no four Hearts, you would have just transferred and not have used Stayman.

All of the above and what follows assumes that you are NOT playing the Smolen convention.

With this hand: #2

S Kxxx

H AJxxx

D xx

C xx

1NT by partner. Bid 2C and if she bids 2D, now you bid 2H, showing 8-9 HCP and five Hearts and four Spades.

If you had used a mere transfer in either of the above situations, you may have missed the 4-4 fit in the other major. So it is important to use Stayman whenever you have a four-card major in your hand and a short suit (singleton, doubleton or void. No shortness, no Stayman).

Naturally, on # 1 hand above, if opener answered your Stayman question with 2 of a major, you would have bid 4 of that major and it would be all over.

On # 2 hand above, depending on how aggressive you are, if opener bid 2S after your Stayman, you would bid either 3S or 4S. (Alex says to check out who you are playing against first!) Of course if partner were to bid 2H, you would jump to 4H on # 2.

Many of you know the Texas Transfer. Everything's big in Texas!

Here is your hand:

S AQxxxx
H Kx
D Qxx
C xx

Partner opens 1NT. When you have only a five-card major, you have to find out whether the NT opener likes your major or not. After all, she could have opened 1NT with only two little cards in your major.

But when you have SIX of a major, you know that you have a guaranteed eight-card fit in that major since she will not have opened with a singleton in that suit.

With this hand, you bid 4H and that shows 8 or more HCP and at least six Spades. Partner must bid 4S and in this case, the auction is all over.

While in this auction

1NT - 2D

2H - 4NT ...4NT is quantitative asking partner

Are you minimum or maximum and do you want to play it in my major or in NT?
Partner either

Passes (minimum and NOT liking Hearts: i.e. a doubleton)

6NT (maximum and NOT liking Hearts)

5H (minimum with 3 or more Hearts)

6H (maximum with 3 or more Hearts)

4NT cannot be any form of Blackwood in that scenario because we have not agreed trumps. If you wanted to ask about aces, you had to use Gerber.

BUT once you have used the Texas Transfer, you have set the trump suit in stone. This will be trumps, you say loudly.

S x
H KQJxxx
D AQx
C Kxx

1NT - 4D (Texas Transfer)

4H - 4NT is now Key Card Blackwood because you have agreed on a trump suit.

So what should you bid when you have SIX of one major and four of the other major?

Do you have a four-card major? You answer "yes!"
Then you are supposed to use Stayman.

S KQ10xxx
 H AQxx
 D xx
 C x

1NT - 2C

2D - 4H will now be Texas Transfer showing SIX Spades and FOUR Hearts. Opener will now bid 4S. The point is that if you had merely used a Jacoby Transfer to start with

- a) you may have missed a 4-4 fit in Hearts
- b) you could not later tell partner that you had six Spades and four Hearts.

It is essential that you discuss these auctions with your partner(s) so that you are both on the same page.

With 5-5 in the majors? Another lesson for another day! Remind me!

But here is one more situation... We remind you that we are assuming in this article that you are not playing Smolen or Puppet Stayman.

2NT - 3C

3D - 4H So what in the world is that?

Well it is the same idea as

1NT - 2C

2D - 4H which shows six Spades and four Hearts

And so

2NT - 3C

3D - 4H shows six Spades and four Hearts (Texas Transfer)

And now for a hand that we played on Day one in Rome as we ran from the plane to check in at the hotel and then off to play bridge at 5 pm.

	North SAQ5432 HAQJ10 D 8 C53
	South S K9 H K6 DAKQ93 CKQJ2
2NT - 3C 3D - 4H 4S - 4NT 5H - 6S	

I was South and picked up this pretty hand. I chose to open 2NT. That way, if I am playing the hand, then the opening lead has to "come up to" my King of Spades or Hearts.

The auction was fun. We had not talked about these sequences in a long time but fortunately I figured it out. Sadly, the opponent on lead cashed the Club Ace immediately and the rest of the tricks were a piece of cake. If he does not cash, as it turns out on this hand, he does not get it at all, as the Clubs go bye-bye on the long Diamonds.

PLAY THIS HAND WITH US

by Barbara

	S QJ75 H 973 D AKJ42 C 2	
S 32 H KQJ10 D 75 C K8543		S4 H 865 D Q983 C J10976
1S - 4C* 4H - 5D 6S	S AK10986 H A42 D 108 C AQ	

* A special bid called a Splinter bid showing four-card spade support, 13-15 points and a singleton or void in clubs.

Opening lead: H King

When I was just learning to play bridge, my bridge teacher taught me, "When your partner lays down a five-card suit in dummy, you must smile and say, 'Thank you, partner.'" While courtesy dictates that we always thank partner, regardless of what treasures (or the lack thereof!) he produces, on this deal, declarer has every reason to be sincere in his thanks!

As the dummy is tabled, declarer warily counts his losers. He has two quick heart losers and one loser in clubs. The latter can be easily trumped in dummy. For the rest, he realizes that there is a potential for a diamond finesse and also for a finesse in clubs. However, none of South's diamonds is a loser — the DA and the king rest happily in the dummy — so if he takes a diamond finesse, he risks turning a non-loser into a loser, which would cost him the contract. The same fate could await him in clubs.

Let's take a closer look at those diamonds. There are five in dummy and two in declarer's hand, making seven. That leaves six diamonds for the bad guys, an even number. Odds are that the suit will break 4-2. Can you see a winning strategy?

If declarer cashes two high diamonds and then ruffs two in his hand, eventually the thirteenth diamond in dummy will become a winner. He'll be able to discard a losing heart on it. (Note that when you are establishing a long suit in dummy, very often the only entries to dummy will be in the trump suit. Thus, when performing long-suit establishment, you must not pull trumps first.)

For this to work, it is imperative that you preserve enough entries to dummy. How would you go about it?

Win the opening lead of the HK with the HA and then play the S8 to dummy's SQ, saving the S6 to get to dummy's S7 later. Since both opponents follow in spades, you can now cash the SJ. Next, play the DA-K and ruff a diamond; now back to dummy by cashing the CA and ruffing a club in dummy. Finally, ruff yet another small diamond and, lo and behold, the DJ is finally high. Now you can play your carefully preserved S6 to dummy's S7, play the DJ and pitch a losing heart from declarer's hand. Well done!

Long suit establishment: It's a wonderful way to discard losers on a long suit in the dummy. It does take some careful maneuvering however as often you will have entry problems. Frequently it means that we cannot pull trumps first as the trump suit will provide you with the only entries to the dummy.

Try it, you'll like it!!