

JACOBY 2NT FORCING MAJOR RAISE

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

♥ The Jacoby 2NT convention is another invention of the late great **Oswald Jacoby** (1902-1984) of Dallas, Texas, who also popularized transfer bids and weak jump overcalls.

Perhaps, when you first learned to play, you were taught that raising partner's major-suit opening to the three-level was forcing, showing trump support and 13-15 points. Some people still play that way. The problem with that, of course, is that you are rather stuck when you have one of those awkward invitational hands with four-card trump support for partner and 10-12 points (including distribution). You are too good for a simple raise to the two-level, but not good enough to insist on game. The modern style is to use the sequences 1♥-3♥ and 1♠-3♠ to show a 'limit raise' — an invitational hand.

When you adopt limit raises, you obviously cannot also use the raise to the three-level to show a game-going hand, possibly even with slam interest, so you have to find another way to do that. Jacoby's answer was to use 2NT for that purpose. Using 2NT rather than 3♥ or 3♠ for this purpose also keeps the bidding lower, enabling the opener to provide some useful information.

BY THE WAY

While using Jacoby 2NT shows a minimum of 13 points, the bid is actually unlimited. The 2NT bidder could in fact have a very strong hand.



How do you respond to Jacoby 2NT?

You can have three basic types of hand for a 1♥ or 1♠ opening:

- 1) *an unbalanced hand with a singleton or void somewhere*
- 2) *a hand with a strong second five-card suit*
- 3) *a balanced or semi-balanced hand*

Let's take each type of hand in turn. Let's say you have opened 1♥ in each case:

Type 1) *An unbalanced hand with a singleton or void somewhere*

♠ K 5 3 ♥ K Q J 6 3 ♦ 6 ♣ A J 5 2

<i>Partner</i>	<i>You</i>
	1♥
2NT	3♦

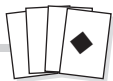
After partner has responded with 2NT (showing a game raise in hearts) you simply bid your singleton or void at the 3-level — in this case, 3♦. This says nothing about your strength, but simply tells partner that you have a singleton (or void) in the bid suit. To see how useful this information is, let's look at a couple of hands partner might have for his Jacoby 2NT bid:

<i>Partner</i>	<i>You</i>
♠ A 2	♠ K 5 3
♥ A 10 9 4	♥ K Q J 6 3
♦ 9 7 4 3	♦ 6
♣ K Q 4	♣ A J 5 2

Opposite a 1♥ opening, partner has a textbook game raise, and duly responds 2NT. Looking at the two hands together, you would certainly like to reach 6♥.

BY THE WAY

It is nearly always bad to have high cards in a suit where partner has a singleton or void. These are called 'wasted values'.



<i>Partner</i>	<i>You</i>
♠ A 2	♠ K 5 3
♥ A 10 9 4	♥ K Q J 6 3
♦ K Q 4	♦ 6
♣ 9 7 4 3	♣ A J 5 2

However, while his hand is equally strong this time too, if you look at the two hands you'll see that game is quite high enough. The difference, of course, is that in the second case the ♦KQ are wasted opposite opener's shortness, whereas in the first pair of hands all of your high cards are working.

Playing Jacoby 2NT these are simple hands to bid. Your 3♦ immediately tells partner that you have diamond shortness and he is well-placed to judge how well

your hands fit. In the first case, he'll push onwards, knowing that you have no wasted values. In the second, he'll sign off in game, warned that there is serious diamond wastage.

Type 2) A hand with a strong second five-card suit

♠ 8 ♥ K Q 10 8 7 3 ♦ 5 ♣ A Q 10 8 3

Partner	You
	1♥
2NT	4♣

If the auction starts 1♥-2NT, on this hand you jump to the four-level in your second suit. This does *not* deny a singleton or void — in fact, you're certain to have one. It does, however, emphasize that the most important feature of your hand is a good second suit. It is easy to construct forcing heart raises that fit well with this hand, and others that do not. By describing your hand immediately, you allow your partner to judge how well the hands fit together.

Partner	You
♠ A J 5	♠ 8
♥ A 10 9 4	♥ K Q 10 8 7 3
♦ 9 7 4 3	♦ 5
♣ K 4	♣ A Q 10 8 3

On this hand, partner knows that the ♣K is a magic card, and will press on to an excellent slam. With the ♦K instead of the ♣K, partner would be much more wary (you must be short in spades and diamonds, since you have two other 5-card suits); in fact, slam would be worse than 50% if his minors were reversed.

Type 3) A balanced or semi-balanced hand

♠ 9 8 ♥ K Q 10 8 7 ♦ Q 5 ♣ A J 10 3

Partner	You
	1♥
2NT	4♥

This type of hand has no singletons or voids — likely shapes are 5332, 5422 or 6322. However, there are three rebids available to describe these hands — 3♥, 3NT and 4♥. (Note that having found at least a 5-4 major-suit fit, you never want to play in 3NT and thus it can be given a conventional meaning.)

The most efficient method is that a jump to game (4♥ in the auction above) shows a completely minimum hand. (The logic of this is that partner has forced to game already, and with good hands we want to leave the maximum amount of room to explore slam. Getting to game immediately therefore shows the worst hand.) On the hand shown, this would be the appropriate response: it is a minimum opener, with no shortness, and semi-balanced.

There are, as usual, a number of variations and styles as to how to play the

BY THE WAY

What about those balanced 13-15 hands on which you used to bid a natural 2NT? For example, partner opens 1♠ and you have:

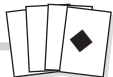
♠ 94 ♥ AJ4 ♦ AQ84 ♣ K983

Start by bidding your lowest suit (in this case, 2♣) and then bid the appropriate number of notrump at your second turn.



BY THE WAY

2NT by responder is no longer Jacoby if the opponents overcall partner's major-suit opening bid. It reverts to its natural meaning.



3♥ rebid by opener, and what to use a rebid of 3NT to mean. We suggest you use 3♥ to show a better than minimum hand with very good trumps (two of the top three honors), and 3NT as better than minimum without very good trumps.

♠ A 8 ♥ K Q 10 8 7 ♦ Q 5 ♣ A J 10 3

<i>Partner</i>	<i>You</i>
	1♥
2NT	3♥

This hand certainly qualifies as better than minimum, and the trumps are good enough to make a 3♥ response.

♠ A 8 ♥ Q 10 8 7 4 ♦ Q 5 ♣ A K J 10

<i>Partner</i>	<i>You</i>
	1♥
2NT	3NT

This time, with poor trumps, rebid 3NT. Partner may even decide to play there!

Summary

- ✓ To use Jacoby 2NT over a 1♥ or 1♠ opener you must have:
 - 1) Game-forcing or better values

AND

 - 2) At least four-card support for partner's major

- ✓ After partner uses Jacoby 2NT, you can rebid as follows:
 - 1) bid a suit at the three-level in which you are singleton or void
 - 2) jump to the four-level with a strong two-suiter
 - 3) with no singleton or void:
 - bid game in the agreed major with a minimum
 - bid three of the agreed major with extra values and good trumps (two of the top three honors)
 - rebid 3NT with extra values but poor trumps

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NOW TRY THESE...

What is your next bid on each of these hands?

1 ♠ K J 6 3
 ♡ A 8
 ♦ A J 9 4
 ♣ 8 5 3

Partner **You**
 1♠ ?

2 ♠ A Q 9 4
 ♡ A 6
 ♦ A 9 5 4
 ♣ A K J

Partner **You**
 1♠ ?

3 ♠ A 7
 ♡ K Q 7
 ♦ J 10 8 3
 ♣ K J 10 7

Partner **You**
 1♠ ?

4 ♠ K Q 7
 ♡ Q 10 8
 ♦ K J 3
 ♣ Q J 8 4

Partner **You**
 1♠ ?

5 ♠ A Q 8 3
 ♡ 4
 ♦ A 5
 ♣ A K J 9 7 4

Partner **You**
 1♠ ?

6 ♠ K Q J 9 5
 ♡ A 5
 ♦ K Q 4
 ♣ Q 5 3

Partner **You**
 1♠
 2NT ?

7 ♠ K J 7 4 2
 ♡ 3
 ♦ A 5 3 2
 ♣ K Q 5

Partner **You**
 1♠
 2NT ?

8 ♠ K Q 7 6 3
 ♡ Q 3 2
 ♦ K J 4
 ♣ Q 3

Partner **You**
 1♠
 2NT ?

9 ♠ J 9 7 6 3
 ♡ A K 4
 ♦ A 4
 ♣ K J 5

Partner **You**
 1♠
 2NT ?

10 ♠ K Q 7 5 3 2
 ♡ —
 ♦ A Q 10 8 4
 ♣ K 4

Partner **You**
 1♠
 2NT ?

ANSWERS

- 1 2NT You have enough points to insist on game as well as four-card spade support. Be aware, however, that having made this bid you are completely minimum.
- 2 2NT This time you have lots of extra values, but the best way to start is with 2NT and see whether partner can tell you anything useful. For example, if partner bids 3♦ next (showing a singleton or void in diamonds) then you will be well on your way to bidding a grand slam.
- 3 2♣ You used to bid 2NT on this type of hand, but you can no longer do so. Bid 2♣ intending to bid 3NT next round.
- 4 2♣ There is a conventional alternative here, if you and your partner wish to play it. You can use 3NT to show exactly this hand: three-card spade support, values for game, 4-3-3-3 shape, and no real slam interest.
- 5 3♣ Yes, you have game values and four-card spade support, but that doesn't mean you should always bid 2NT if there is a more descriptive bid available. On the assumption that you play jump shifts as strong, we suggest 3♣ here. If you play weak jump shifts, you should start with 2♣ on this hand. There will be plenty of time to support spades later.
- 6 3♠ Balanced, extra values, and good trumps. Perfect!
- 7 3♥ This says nothing about your hand other than telling partner you have at most a singleton heart. You can tell him you are minimum later by failing to co-operate with any slam tries he makes.
- 8 4♠ You are not really sorry you opened this hand, especially now you've found a spade fit. However, it's not really suitable for slam unless partner has a super hand. Tell him you are minimum and balanced by jumping to game immediately, and leave any further moves to him.
- 9 3NT You have extra values, but you are balanced, and it is important that partner knows you have bad trumps. Even though you may have plenty of high card points, you certainly don't want to reach 6♠ if partner's trumps are ♠Q542 or even ♠K542.
- 10 4♦ Anything from 4♠ to 7♦ or 7♠ are possible contracts, so tell partner you have a good two-suited hand and leave him to judge how well the hands fit together.