

From Strong Twos to Weak Two bids



Sandra Landy

IN the early versions of Standard English, to open the bidding at the two level was to make a strong bid, forcing for one round and showing one or two good suits with good high-card points. Here are two hands taken from *Really Easy Bidding*, where the topic is discussed more fully:

♠ A Q J 8 6 5
♥ A K
♦ 8 3
♣ A J 2

This one-suited hand has five spade tricks, two more in hearts and one club trick. With good points, shape and eight tricks,

open 2♠. Partner must respond to 2♠. If partner bids 2NT, rebid 3♠. If partner bids anything else, our side is forced to game.

♠ A Q J 8 6 5
♥ A K J 3 2
♦ K 7
♣ Void

With 6-5 in the majors, open 2♠. If partner responds 2NT, rebid 3♥. With no fit for either major partner just rebids 3♠. After any other response, the side is forced to game.

You can't actually guarantee game with either of these hands, but you would like to show partner your strong suits to decide which suit to play in. An opening bid of 2♠ is forcing for *one* round. That is, partner must respond and with a poor hand should give the negative response of 2NT. This allows you to rebid 3♠ on the first hand (showing at least a six-card spade suit) or 3♥ on the second (showing a strong two-suiter).

Playing Strong Twos, an opening bid of 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠ shows:

- a good suit of at least five cards and often longer;
- a hand where with reasonable breaks we can count at least eight playing tricks;
- a strong hand with high cards, usually in the 18 to 23 point range.

The early developers of the Acol system decided to play Two bids as described earlier, with an artificial opening 2♣ as the only game-forcing bid. Acol Two bids are great for describing these good hands, but they don't come up very often, so many players have adopted Weak Twos in diamonds, hearts and spades, with only 2♣ retaining its original strong meaning. Actually Weak Twos are nothing new and were invented as long ago as 1925. At that time all opening Two bids in a suit were natural and forcing to game, a system rarely played nowadays.

Like Weak Threes, Weak Twos are mostly aimed at disrupting the opponents' auction. Opponents lose their normal opening bids and are forced to enter the auction at a higher level. If opponents do win the contract, partner is helped with the opening lead.

A typical Weak Two bid has about 6-10 points and a six-card suit. Your hand shape will normally be 6-3-2-2 or 6-3-3-1, but you might be 6-4-2-1 or 6-4-3-0 if the four card suit is a minor. If partner hasn't passed, it's good to have a suit which contains one or two of the top three honours, or three of the top five honours, as this will help partner decide whether to try for game with a good hand. If partner has passed and you are third in hand, you can ignore these rules. **Note**, however, that in fourth seat, after three passes, you should play Strong Twos as now you are no longer pre-empting the opponents.

Playing Weak Twos, an opening bid of 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠ shows:

- a suit of six cards headed by at least one top honour card;
- a hand without four cards in any unbid major;
- a hand of 6-10 points, not worth a one level opening.

In first seat at Love All, which of the following hands would you open with a Weak Two?

Hand 1 ♠ A Q 8 6 4 2 ♥ J 10 5 4 ♦ Q 6 5 ♣ Void	Hand 2 ♠ J 8 5 4 3 2 ♥ 9 3 ♦ A K 5 ♣ 8 3
Hand 3 ♠ K J 10 8 3 2 ♥ 7 ♦ Q J 9 5 ♣ 8 3	Hand 4 ♠ A K Q 8 4 2 ♥ 8 2 ♦ J 9 8 2 ♣ 3
Hand 5 ♠ 4 2 ♥ K Q 10 9 8 7 ♦ 5 2 ♣ 9 6 4	

(1) You could open 2♠, the spade suit is just right. But if you do, you could find partner has heart length and your side has missed a game in hearts. If you swop your heart and club holdings, though, so that you are void in hearts, open 2♠.

(2) Again you could open 2♠ but the suit has very poor honours; partner will expect better. However, if opponents are vulnerable and you are third in hand non-vulnerable, after two passes, open 2♠ as the hand appears to belong to the opposition.

(3) I would open 2♠, even if vulnerable.

(4) You are too good for opening 2♠ first in hand when not vulnerable. With that strong spade suit and good shape, open 1♠ first in hand, but 2♠ in third seat.

(5) I said a Weak Two shows 6-10 points, but I would open this hand 2♥ as the suit is so good. An extra jack in one of the other suits wouldn't make the hand any better.

In my next article I will discuss how the auction can develop after a Weak Two opening. □