

The strongest bid of all

Having examined 2NT and Acol twos, let's look at the opening bid of Two Clubs – the very strongest opening bid of all. With just one exception, an opening bid of Two Clubs says to partner that even if he is holding no card higher than a six, he must keep bidding until we get to game. Of course with no points, he need not show any enthusiasm but he must not pass. A poor hand starts by responding Two Diamonds and that can lead to the one non-game forcing sequence. 2♣ 2♦ 2NT. This 2NT rebid shows 23-24 points and partner responds in the same way he would if you opened 2NT.

What hand is so good that it is worth a 2♣ opening? It's not just that it has lots of points, though it will usually have 23 or more, but that it has such potential to take tricks that the idea of opening one and hearing partner pass is just too much to bear. Here are some examples:

- ♠ A K You won't often hold a balanced hand with 27 points but when you do, open 2♣ and when partner bids 2♦, rebid 3NT. If partner responds anything else, you are going to bid a slam. Take away the ♥K and you would still open 2♣ but rebid just 2NT.
- ♥ A K Q 2
- ♦ A 10 8

- ♠ A 10 9 8 Hands with a long suit often merit a 2♣ bid. Despite having only 22 points, 3NT is certain and slam possible. Playing in clubs would be wrong if partner had nothing, but 6♦ could be making if partner has, say, a singleton spade and the ♥K.
- ♥ A 9
- ♦ A K Q J 10 4
- ♣ A

- ♠ A K Q 10 9 Two suited hands can be even stronger, whilst having fewer points. Only 21 points, but open 2♣ and bid 2♥ over partner's 2♦. Next bid your spades and bid spades again at the turn after. A grand slam could be made if partner has just four little spades and a couple of hearts. Lay the cards out and you will see what I mean.
- ♥ A K J 10 9 2
- ♦
- ♣ A 2

- ♠ K Q J 9 2 Some hands just have lots of points, so we open 2♣ even though we haven't a clue what the final contract might be. This 24 count merits a 2♣ opening, though sometimes that will land you in an unmakeable game.
- ♥ A K Q
- ♦ A
- ♣ A J 4 3

Responses to an opening Two Clubs	
Bid	Meaning
2♦	Usually fewer than 8 points, nothing to do with diamonds
2♥/♠/3♣/♦	A game force, with a 5+ suit headed by an honour. About an ace and a king or the equivalent in high cards.
2NT	8 or more points, fairly balanced. May have poor 5-card suit. May be very strong.
3♥/3♠/4♣/♦	A solid suit of at least 6 cards. Partner should be happy to play in this suit with only one or two small cards in support.
3NT upward	Not normally used as these bids take up all the bidding space.

Practice replying to partner's 2♣ opening. Cover up the answers and have a go.

- ♠ 4 3 Tempting as it is to pass, 2♣ demands that you find a bid. Even with this Yarborough and a feeling that 2♣ is already too high, you must respond 2♦. And if partner rebids 2♥ or 2♠, say 2NT. You must keep bidding till game is reached.
- ♥ 6 5 4
- ♦ 7 6 5
- ♣ 8 6 4 3 2

- ♠ A J 4 3 2 This hand is well worth the positive response of 2♠. If partner continues with 3♣ or 3♦ bid 3NT. Since partner has a strong hand you don't need stoppers in all suits. If partner bids 2NT, bid 3NT and if partner bids 3♥ raise to 4♥.
- ♥ K 10 4
- ♦ 7 6 5
- ♣ 8 3

- ♠ 6 5 4 3 2 With 9 points this hand is worth a positive response too. Even though you have five spades, they are not headed by an honour and it is best to treat them like a 4-card suit. Bid 2NT which is forcing to game. If partner bids 3♣ or 3♦ bid 3♠. If partner bids 3♥ raise to 4♥.
- ♥ Q 10 7
- ♦ Q J 8
- ♣ A 3

- ♠ 9 7 This hand is huge opposite a 2♣ opening. With 13 points, we must be heading for a slam, but start quietly by responding 2NT showing a balanced hand with 8+ points. If we get stuck for a bid, we can always raise partner's suit to slam or bid 6NT. By taking it slowly, we may be able to bid a grand slam.
- ♥ Q 10 7 2
- ♦ A J 8
- ♣ A Q 10 9