

Mini Lesson 5: Strong Two Clubs and Responses

2♦, 2♥ and 2♠ are all weak bids and indicate a hand with 5-11 points and a 6-card suit. What do you do with a strong hand?

A 2♣ opening is reserved for hands that have 22+ points and is forcing. The responder must respond no matter how bad their hand is. The following table is a summary of different openings depending on whether you are balanced or unbalanced.

Unbalanced Hands		
12-21 points	1 of a suit	
22+ points	2♣	

Balanced Hands		2 nd bid
12-14 HCP	1 of a suit	1NT or bid a suit
15-17 HCP	1NT	
18-19 HCP	1 of a suit	jump to 2NT
20-21 HCP	2NT	
22-24 HCP	2♣	Bid 2NT
25-26 HCP	3NT	
27+ HCP	2♣	

There are 3 ways that partnerships at our club respond to a 2C bid:

- **2♦-waiting,**
- **Steps,**
- **Controls**

2♦ Waiting:

By far, the most common convention used is 2♦-waiting.

With 0 to 7 HCP, responder bids 2♦ regardless of their hand pattern. After the negative 2♦ response, the opener must describe what kind of hand they have for their 2♣ bid.

With an unbalanced hand, the opener should bid 2♥, 2♠, 3♣ or 3♦, whichever is the best long suit. These rebids are *forcing*. With 3-card support, the responder should raise the bidder's suit. Without 3 card support, they should bid their own 5-card suit or bid no-trump (lowest level possible). Some partnerships use a single raise to show 6-7 points and a double rise to show a weaker hand.

With a balanced hand, the opener should bid 2NT with 22-24 HCP or 3NT with 27-28 HCP. These rebids are *nonforcing*. After the 2NT rebid, the bidding is just as if the *opening bid* was 2NT. Hence 3♣ is Stayman and 3♦ and 3♥ are transfers. The responder should typically pass 2NT if they have fewer than 4 points.

With 8+ points (slam likely), the responder should give a positive response by bidding a 5+ card suit (2♥, 2♠, 3♣, 3♦) or 2NT with a balanced hand. The opener can then:

- Show their own long suit
- Raise the responder's suit with 3 or more
- Bid no trump
- Ask for aces

If the responder has 10+ points, they should pursue slam either by asking for Aces or bidding it directly.

Steps:

A second response method uses 3-point steps. The responder strictly shows the number of HCPs regardless of distribution. (It says nothing about the suit bid.) The advantage is the opener has a good idea right away if slam is likely. That is, the "level" of the contract is predicted; now the task is to find the suit or NT "fit".

0-3 HCP	2♦
4-6 HCP	2♥
7-9 HCP	2♠
...	...

The rest of the bidding is like the 2-diamond waiting.

Controls:

The third option is for the responder to show the number of Aces and Kings (Controls). The responder assigns their hand 1 point for each King and 2 points for each Ace and then bids up the chain based on how many *control* points the hand contains.

0-1	2♦
2	2♥
3	2♠
...	...

Thus, 2♠ would indicate either 3 Kings or an Ace and a King, and 2NT would indicate 2 Aces, or an Ace and 2 Kings, or 4 Kings. Usually, the opener will know which it is.

Again, the opener quickly has a snapshot of what is possible. The rationale for this method is that Aces and Kings are far more important than Queens and Jacks when bidding slam, and this

gives the opener an early idea if slam is possible even if the points aren't there. The rest of the bidding is similar to the previous methods.

A disadvantage of the last two methods is that it is more likely that the contract will be played in the weak hand in cases where the responder first responds in the opener's best suit.

Test Your Strong 2 Club Bids

How would you bid the following hands?

1. ♠AKQ ♥AK6 ♦A32 ♣KT94
2. ♠AKQ987 ♥AK6 ♦A32 ♣5
3. ♠5 ♥KQJT ♦AK ♣AKT987
4. ♠AKQ5 ♥KQJT ♦T ♣AKT3

How would you respond with the following hands if your partner opened 2♣?

5. ♠A642 ♥T5 ♦Q75 ♣Q752 (Opener 2nd bid is ♥)
6. ♠QT84 ♥T973 ♦82 ♣J62 (Opener 2nd bid is 2NT)
7. ♠2 ♥Q764 ♦QT92 ♣J976 (Opener 2nd bid is ♠, 3rd bid is ♦)
8. ♠K972 ♥AJ ♦T932 ♣QJ6 (Open 2nd bid is NT)
9. ♠T8 ♥T973 ♦82 ♣Q9653 (Opener 2nd bid is 2NT)