

What Bidding Conventions Matter Most for the new Duplicate Bridge Player?

Good conventions are 1) Simple and easy to remember and not prone to error, 2) Valuable – they play an important role in improving your conversation with partner, 3) Additive – they do not confuse what you can say or do with your normal bidding system, and 4) Improve Your Results – because you use them well and understand how to defend them when opponents use them against you.

To work well, conventions should fit in a logical framework or system. Consider starting with a standard framework like SAYC, Standard American (Richard Pavlicek) or 2/1 Game Force (Hardy, Lawrence, Grant/Rodwell). Teachers and system proponents have eliminated much of the confusion, redundancy and overlap so things work together smoothly. Adding conventions to a bidding language is simpler if the language is standard. Let's start with a standard bidding approach and a few basic assumptions that can work in any one of the 3 common natural bidding systems.

Let's assume Standard American framework:

- 1) 5 Card Majors; 1♣ promises 3 cards; 1♦ promises 4 cards (except when 4432); 1NT = 15-17 HCP.
- 2) **2/1** by responder shows 11+ HCP and **promises one more bid**. (*2/1 Game Force is popular with tournament players*).
- 3) Responder's immediate **Jump Shift** is strong natural and forcing to game (preempt if they overcall).
- 4) **Invitational Jumps: Jump support** by responder or **jump rebid** by opener are INVITATIONAL. So in an auction that goes 1♠ – P – 3♠ responder is INVITING game (SAYC/Standard American). *Weak or Preemptive Jump Raises and Jump Shifts are not part of this Basic structure though they are popular with tournament players.*
- 5) **Weak 2 bids:** 2♦, 2♥ and 2♣. Therefore 2♣ is a strong forcing opening.
- 6) **Disciplined preempts** in 1st and 2nd seats (**Rule of 2-3-4**)
- 7) **Weak Jump Overcalls**, and so are jump shifts after opponents overcall (a.k.a. **Jump Shift in Competition**). Both are Disciplined (**Rule of 2-3-4-5**)
- 8) **Fast Arrival**. Once you are in a game forcing auction the more abrupt bid to game is weaker. (*Compare this to Strong Picture Bids – where a Jump implies strength in suits bid with no outside controls in unbid suits*).
- 9) 3NT by responder at 1st bid shows **13-15 HCP balanced hand** with 2-3 card fit for opener's suit.
- 10) **Control bidding** (showing 1st and 2nd round control in a side suit) below game level.

Here are 13 conventions you should know on top of SAYC, Standard American (or 2/1 Game Force). Some have multiple variants or versions. All are common at duplicate bridge.

1N and 2N Opening

2♣ Invitational Stayman

Smolen

Transfer Bids

Lebensohl

After 1N or 2N Rebid

New Minor Forcing

Major Suits

2N Jacoby Major Raise

Splinter Raises

Slam Bidding

Ace Asking Gerber / RKB 1430

4th Suit Forcing

Competitive Bidding

Negative Doubles

Forcing Pass

Competitive Bidding

2-Suit Bids After Opponents Open

Interfering over Opponent's 1NT

When adopting a new convention, pay attention to the meanings, how the new approach changes other bidding sequences and inferences for your partnership, and what to do when opponents interfere. Here is a list of links to follow for more details on these popular approaches.

13 Conventions You Should Know By ❤

	Rationale	Considerations	Links/How TO:
No Trump Bidding	<p>2♦ Invitational Stayman Helps find 4-4 major fits and improve scoring chances after we open 1NT. Useful adjunct: Crawling Stayman (responder has a very weak hand and wants to play in a 4-3 major fit at least. Some choose to play Puppet Stayman, a version built by 2/1 Game Force theorists to find a 5-3 major fit if partner opened 1NT with a 5 card major.</p>	<p>Be sure to integrate with invitational hand and minor suit bidding. Is 1N-P-2♣-P-2♠-P-3♦ forcing or weak?</p> <p>Are you playing Crawling Stayman? What response scheme are you using for Puppet Stayman? Playing Puppet Stayman gives up Garbage Stayman.</p>	<p>Invitational Stayman http://www.bridgehands.com/S/Stayman.htm</p> <p>Crawling Stayman http://www.bridgehands.com/C/Crawling_Stayman.htm</p> <p>Puppet Stayman http://www.bridgehands.com/P/Puppet_Stayman.htm</p>
	<p>Smolen When we hold a game forcing hand with 5+ in both majors opposite partner's 1NT opening, we can find the right major game and ensure the 1NT bidder is the declarer (right-side the contract). Useful over both 1 and 2 NT openings.</p>	<p>Smolen is a game force or slam invitation. Be sure to discuss the meaning of responders subsequent bids (controls, RKB, quantitative 4NT).</p>	<p>Smolen http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/play/Commonly_Used_Conventions/smolen.pdf</p>
	<p>Transfer Bids 4-Suit Transfers help bid long suits in a weak, invitational or strong hand opposite partner's 1NT opening. Major suit transfers are useful over the stronger 2NT opening. Texas Transfers help distinguish between slammish hands with a long major and hands simply interested in the major suit game. Texas Transfers are usually weak, but some use TT to trigger RKB or Exclusion RKB. This preserves responder's 4NT as a quantitative inquiry after a simple major suit transfer. Delayed Texas is a useful add for a 6-4 major suit pattern and a weak hand after the auction goes 1N-P-2♣-P-2♦-P-??</p>	<p>You give up on 2NT as a natural invitation. This means you will use Stayman on some hands with no 4 card major if you want to invite a NT game. You will therefore alert responder's 2N rebid—"Might be no 4 card major".</p> <p>Texas Transfers are ON if a jump in Competition – some forget and think partner is making a natural bid... Be sure you agree what 1N-P-2♦-P-4♦ means... Be sure you agree what the Gap Bid means after partner transfers to either minor. Talk whether a minor transfer can have a 4-card major.</p>	<p>4-Suit Transfers http://www.bridgeguys.com/Conventions/4SuitTransferBid.html</p> <p>Texas Transfers http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/play/Commonly_Used_Conventions/texas_transfers.pdf</p>
	<p>Lebensohl When opponents interfere at the 2-level over our 1NT opening, we need a way to show the difference between invitational and forcing hands, inquire about (the other) 4-card major(s), and identify whether we have their shown suit sufficiently stopped.</p>	<p>You give up on 2NT as a natural invitation in competition. This is a small loss given the competitive bidding advantages gained.</p>	<p>Lebensohl http://www.bridgeguys.com/Conventions/Lebensohl.html</p>
	<p>Ace Asking Once you've found a fit and located controls, checking to be sure opponent's cannot win 2 fast tricks helps get to safer slams. RKB 1430 is marginally better than 0314 and much better than standard Blackwood. Gerber can be useful in NT auctions but many players choose to not use it at all or use it more widely than NT auctions risking confusion.</p>	<p>Playing RKB after a minor suit fit might make it hard to stop in game. Many play Gerber or Minorwood to deal with this.</p> <p>Be sure you know how partner responds to Gerber.</p> <p>Sometimes 4♣ is more useful as a control bid than an Ace ask. Beware!</p>	<p>RKB 1430 http://www.bridgeguys.com/Conventions/1430Blackwood.html</p> <p>Gerber http://www.bridgehands.com/G/Gerber.htm</p>
Slam Bidding	<p>4th Suit Forcing Once 3 suits are mentioned by our side, the 4th suit cannot be a place to play. Instead theorists use this mechanism to drive to game and explore slam possibilities.</p>	<p>Be sure to know the responses and the inferences about responder's major suit length and 4th suit holdings. This one is complex.</p>	<p>4th Suit Forcing http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/play/Commonly_Used_Conventions/4thsuitforcing.pdf</p>

1N Rebid	New Minor Forcing helps bid accurately after opener's 1NT & 2NT rebid. Can be after 1♣, 1♦ or 1♥ opening.	We cannot play 2 of the other minor in 1NT rebid auctions. Bidding weak hands with 4 card major and 6 card minor takes special care. Be sure to discuss what opener's rebids and responder's 3-level rebids mean.	New Minor Forcing http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/play/Commonly_Used_Conventions/new_minorforcing.pdf
Major Suits	2N Jacoby Major Raise Allows the direct limit raise and promises a balanced game force with at least 4 trumps	There are many response schemes. Pick the one that you like and will remember. Larry Cohen proposed an advanced version you might like.	2N Jacoby Major Raise http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/play/Commonly_Used_Conventions/jacoby2NT.pdf http://www.larryco.com/BridgeArticles/ArticleDetails.aspx?articleID=45
	Splinter Raises Since you use Jacoby 2NT for balanced game force hands with 4 trumps, splinter bids provide the unbalanced equivalent. Usually limited strength 11-15 HCP or so. Avoid splinters with a singleton Ace unless you have compensating values.	Be sure to have 4 trumps or more, and at least 2 nd round control in the unbid suits. Some experts prefer to use hidden splinters to give less information to the defense.	Splinter Raises http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/play/Commonly_Used_Conventions/splinters.pdf
Competitive Bidding	Negative Doubles When opponents interfere, finding a 4 card major or showing game going strength both benefit from negative doubles.	Penalizing opponent's overcall requires opener to reopen with a double. Be aware!	Negative Doubles http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/play/Commonly_Used_Conventions/negativedouble.pdf
	2-Suit Bids After Opponents Open Showing 55 or better shape is a powerful competitive weapon. Doing so in one bid is very helpful. Michaels Cue Bid shows majors (over a minor) or the other major and an undisclosed minor over a major. Unusual NT usefully shows either the minors or the 2 lowest bid suits.	Be sure to discuss what version of the Unusual NT you play – 2 Lowest or always minors. Discuss if your 2-suited bids show 8-11 and 16+ or simply 8+ HCP. It matters.	Michaels Cue Bid http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/play/Commonly_Used_Conventions/michaelscuebid.pdf Unusual NT http://www.bridgeguys.com/Conventions/UnusualNoTrump.html http://www.acbl.org/play/in-their-own-words.php?convention=sheinwold
	Forcing Pass When we are in an invitational or stronger auction and opponents bid to the 4 level or higher, our immediate pass is Forcing, showing no wasted values in THEIR suit, and a willingness to declare or defend. Partner must bid 1 more in our suit or double. An immediate double would show wasted values in their suit or a featureless minimum with no hope for game.	Be sure to discuss what auctions trigger the forcing pass and what do not. What does partner's pass mean in this auction: 2♣ (Strong)- Any Interference - P	Forcing Pass http://www.bridgehands.com/F/Forcing_Pass.htm
	Interfering over their 1NT opening Shape and useful strength in 2 suits is enough to interfere with opponent's 1NT auction. Do it! Revised Cappelletti preserves the penalty double and natural single suited major suit overcalls. DONT shows 2-suited hands at a lower level and discourages penalizing 1NT.	Be sure you and partner are on the same response scheme page. Be clear about what minimum hands partner should expect for an overcall.	Cappelletti http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cappelletti http://www.bridgeguys.com/Conventions/CappellettiRevised.html
			DONT http://www.bridgeguys.com/Conventions/DONT.html

Google searches can find you even more detail. Enjoy!

Keywords: Conventions That Work, Standard Bidding Framework, Prepare for your Opponents