



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(415) 2♣ Opening Bids

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Level: 3 of 10 (1 of 6)

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General

When we have a great hand, we need to be able to make a bid that partner cannot pass. An opening bid of 2♣ shows a great hand and does not mean anything about ♣ - it is “strong, artificial and forcing”.

This opening promises a hand that has close to game (or better) on its own and feels that it can't afford to open with a simple 1-level natural bid. 2♣ opening bids are forcing to at least one level below game (“game minus 1”). So even if partner has no values, we must play at least 2NT, 3-Major, or 4-minor.

What Kind of Hands Open 2♣ and Why?

There are a variety of types of hands that may open the bidding 2♣:

- Balanced hands with 22+ HCP
 - There is no other way to show hands with this many HCP.
- Single-Suited Unbalanced Hands with 20+ HCP (usually 9+ tricks)
 - These hands have 6+card suits and are afraid that if they open at the one-level if they might play there when they can make a game.
- Two-Suited (or Three-Suited) Unbalanced Hands with 10+ tricks and a large number of HCP.
 - These two-suited hands have almost game in their hand and are often interested in slam.

What Kind of Strong Hands Do Not Open 2♣ and Why

Two- and three-suited hands rarely open 2♣ because a 2♣ opening bid takes up a lot of bidding space. If we open 2♣ and have two suits to show, it can become difficult to have enough space to describe our hand and keep the auction below 3NT. When we have a very distributional hand, the opponents often have very distributional hands, and thus can preempt us if we open 2♣ with this kind of shapely hand. This also makes opening at the 1-level safer; our bid is much less likely to pass out when everyone at the table has a distributional hand.



Thinking About 2♣ Opening Bids

The most important thing about making good decisions when it comes to opening 2♣ is to think about 2♣ openings properly. Most bridge players are excited to open the bidding with 2♣ and they are proud to open 2♣. This is the wrong way to think about opening 2♣. We should open 2♣ only when we must or when we feel obligated to because we are afraid of getting passed out at the 1-level when we can make a game. If we think of opening 2♣ as something we are forced to do and that is not a fun thing to do, then we will break the habit of opening 2♣ when we should not.

Responding to 2♣ - Positive vs. Bust

The standard method of responding to 2♣ is to respond 2♦, “waiting”, on almost all hands, and rarely bid a new natural suit. But one of the modern methods is to use 2♥* as a “bust” bid. When partner opens 2♣, the first thing we need to do is tell partner whether we have enough to force to game (which opposite such a strong hand doesn’t take much) or we have a horrible hand and we are willing to stop short of game.

2♣ ___?

- 2♦* Artificial Game Forcing – Shows at least an Ace, King, or two Queens.
- 2♥* Artificial “Bust” – Double negative. Less than a 2♦ bid.
- 2♠ 5+c♠, usually 2/3 honors, 8+ pts (often 2-suited and not wanting to wait to show suits)
- 3♣ 6+c♣, usually 2/3 honors, 8+ pts
- 3♦ 6+c♦, usually 2/3 honors, 8+ pts

Note: These positive bids usually have 2 of the top 3 honors but could not if they have a good hand with lots of playing strength (like they have a 5-5 hand).

Some Examples of 2♣ Openings

Balanced Hands

In both of these auctions we play “Systems On”; we respond as if partner opened 2NT by using Stayman, Transfers, etc.

Example 1

2♣ 2♦
2NT

Example 2

2♣ 2♥*
2NT

In both auctions, 2NT shows a balanced hand with 22 to a bad 24 points. A 5-card Major is common.



Example 3

2♣ 2♦/♥*

3NT

This 3NT rebid shows a good 24 to 26 points. Balanced Hand. 5-card Major Common.

Example 4

2♣ 2♦/♥*

4NT

This 4NT rebid shows 27-28 points. Balanced Hand. 5-card Major Common.

Major Suit Hands

Example 5

2♣ 2♦

2M

This usually shows a 6+c Major Suit with 20+ HCP. It could be a 5-4 hand, but this is much rarer.

Applying the Principle of Fast Arrival

Example 6

2♣ 2♦

2M 4M

Since 2♦ is GF, this shows the worst possible 2♦ bid. It usually shows no Ace or King.

Example 7

2♣ 2♦

2M 3M

Since 2♦ is GF, then 3M is forcing and stronger than a jump to 4M – usually showing an Ace or King.

Conclusion

2♣ opening bid auctions are not common, but when they do come up it is important for you and partner to have good agreements about how to handle these strong hands. It can be frustrating to pick up an enormous hand and make a bid that you think is strong and forcing only to have partner pass. Avoiding that kind of misunderstanding is what having good agreements accomplishes, so make sure to discuss these auctions with your partner.