



# Adventures in Bridge

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## *This Week in Bridge*

### **(363) Responder's Rebids After Opener's Strong 2-Suited Hand**

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Level: 6, 8 of 10 (3, 4 of 6)

Robert S. Todd

[robert@advinbridge.com](mailto:robert@advinbridge.com)

#### **General**

There are two types of auctions where the Opener shows a strong unbalanced 2-suited hand (without a fit) – *Jump Shift* and *Reverse* auctions. Both of these auctions force to at least the 3-level; Opener's jump shift is game forcing, while their reverse is forcing for 1-round. A jump shift by Opener eats up a lot of bidding space (often getting us to the 3-level immediately), so as Responder in those auctions we will be cramped to find a fit below 3NT. While a reverse usually keeps the auction a bid lower than a jump shift, it gives us more complexity in what subsequent bids are forcing and non-forcing. Let's look at how we select our rebid as Responder after Opener shows a strong 2-suiter.

#### **Responder's Rebid After a Jump Shift**

When Opener makes a strong jump shift to the 3-level, they have shown a good 18+ points and created a game forcing auction. Knowing that we are going to game is helpful, but the auction is now extremely high as we are almost up to 3NT, a point where we have to make a decision to go past or not. Our focus as Responder is on Major suits:

- If we have a 6-card suit (or occasionally a good 5-card suit) of our own, we often rebid it.
- If Opener started the auction with a Major suit and we have 3-card support, we have a fit and are not under much pressure – we know where to play.
- If partner opens with a Major suit and we have 2-card support, we often take a “preference” back to their primary suit (their Major) at the 3-level. This shows what is usually 2-card support.

#### *Example 1*

1♠ 1NT  
3♦ 3♠

—  
This 3♠ bid usually shows 2-card ♠ support. If Opener has only a 5-card suit they will often offer 3NT and if they have a 6<sup>th</sup> ♠, they will go on to 4♠. The goal is to search for a fit.

- 3NT Only 5-card ♠, offer to play
- 4♠ 6+card ♠, we have a ♠ fit
- 4♦ At least 5-5 shape, no interest in playing 3NT.



*Example 2*

1♥    1♠  
3♣    —

Responder generally looks for a Major suit fit and falls back on trying to get to 3NT.

- 3♠    6+card ♠ (occasionally a very good 5-card suit)
- 3♥    2+card ♥
- 3NT    ♦ stopper
- 3♦    Asks for a ♦ stopper or 3-card ♠ support.
- 4♥    *Discuss this with your partner - some partnerships play this as a 3-card limit raise.*

When Opener's jump shift is at the 2-level, there is more room for the Responder to search for a Major suit fit. In these auctions, Opener's primary suit will be a minor suit. Also, there is a 2NT bid available for Responder to use.

*Example 3*

1♣    1♥  
2♠    —

- 2NT    Stopper in ♦, 6-9 pts (or a very strong hand that will make a slam try later)
- 3NT    Stopper in ♦, about 10-12 pts (extra values in a game force)
- 3♦    Asks for a ♦ stopper
- 4♠    4-card ♠, to play, Fast Arrival
- 3♠    4-card ♠, slam interest
- 3♥    6+card ♥
- 3♣    3+card ♣ and some reason not to be seeking 3NT.

**Responder's Rebid after Opener's Reverse**

When Opener starts with a lower-ranking suit at the 1-level and then rebids a higher-ranking suit at the 2-level, this is a reverse – showing about 17+ points and forcing for 1-round. Most partnerships agree this is more than just forcing for 1-round; it is forcing to the 3-level in Opener's first bid suit.

That means that Responder can rebid at the 2-level, as this is still forcing.



Here is an auction using standard agreements.

*Example 4*

1♣     1♠

2♥     —

- 2♠     Decent 5+card suit (or 6+card suit), forcing 1-round, still could be 6+ points
- 2NT     *Natural, 6+ points, forcing for 1-round, ♦ stopper (see below for better approach)*
- 3♣     ♣ fit, 3+card, 6-7 points, NF
- 3♦     Game Forcing, asking for a ♦ stopper
- 3♥     4-card ♥, 6-7 point, NF
- 3♠     Good 6+card suit, GF, 8+ points
- 3NT     To Play
- 4♥     4-card ♥, 8+ points, To Play (not slam interest)

Here is an example of hand where we would rebid 2♠ with only a 5-card suit.

*Example 5*

♠ AJT76

♥ J5

♦ Q98

♣ 532

If partner has ♠Qx or ♠Kx, we are happy to play in ♠.

### **Lebensohl 2NT over Reverses – Another Approach for Responder**

When Opener makes a reverse at the 2-level, it is extremely unlikely that 2NT is going to be the right place to play – in fact, the reverse is forcing to 3-minor. That means that we will not give much up if we use 2NT by Responder after a reverse as a conventional bid. We will use our same general Lebensohl (or Simplesohl) structure, where 2NT is used as a relay and shows a bad hand and a desire to stop the auction below game. This structure gives Responder multiple ways to bid each suit – to limp their way there, using the 2NT bid, or to bid directly at the 3-level.



*Example 6*

1♦     1♠  
2♥     \_\_\_?

**Using the 2NT Relay**

Here we use 2NT to show a bad hand, usually 5 to 7- points – not enough to game force opposite a minimum reverse. This 2NT bid asks partner to bid 3♣, a relay. Responder can now show where they would like to play the hand:

- With long ♣, Responder can pass 3♣.
- With a couple of ♦ (2+cards) Responder can relay and then bid 3♦ to sign off in 3♦.
- With a bad hand with a ♥ fit (4-card) Responder can relay and then bid 3♥. Opener will then know about the Major suit fit and could re-evaluate their hand and bid on to 4♥. Danger - if this goes down 1 – it will be Opener's fault.

**Responder's Bid Above 2NT**

Since 2NT is used to show all bad hands that want to play at the 3-level, then any bid above 2NT is natural and forcing.

*Example 7*

1♦     1♠  
2♥     \_\_\_?

- 3♦     3+♦, GF, 7+ points
- 3♥     4+♥, GF, Slam Try
- 3♠     6+♠, GF, 7+ points
- 3NT    To Play
- 4♥    To Play
- 3♣    Artificial, GF, Usually no ♣ stopper
- 2♠    Unchanged from above, decent 5+card ♠ suit, 1-round forcing, 6+ points

**Conclusion**

As Responder, when the Opener makes a jump Shift or a reverse they show a strong 2-suited hand (which makes us happy), but they also eat up a lot of our bidding space and make it difficult. When partner makes a jump shift, we know we are going to game and just search for our fit – Major suit first, notrump likely next, minor only when a problem or interested in slam. When partner makes a reverse then we have more room to communicate but need to have good agreements about what bids are forcing and which are not. Using 2NT as a relay in these reverse auctions (Lebensohl over Reverses) is a good agreement. Make sure you and partner are on the same page about the meaning of Responder's rebids. It is very frustrating when Opener has a strong distributional hand to have a bidding mixup.