So, having warned the reader adequately, it is appropriate to begin introducing a number of useful conventions, artificial and otherwise, that will improve your bidding accuracy.

2♠ Range Ask

How It Works: In the auction

Partner You

1N ?

2♠ shows either

* 6+♣, any strength
* 8-9 balanced, no 4M

After 2♠, partner bids as follows

2N minimum values

3♣ maximum values

It would be feasible to assign 3♦-3N as maximum value super-accepts of ♣s. But that hasn’t been done adequately yet.

When responder has a hand that wants to play in 3♣, he bids 3♣ (or passes opener’s 3♣ rebid).

When responder has a hand that wants to force to game/slam, he can bid shortness (3♦/3♥/3♠) or bid 4♣ without shortness.

System Effects:

Range 2♠ will likely have the following effects

* For previous 4 way transfer players (♠-♣, NT-♦)
  + 2N via Stayman always shows a 4 card major.
  + The ‘fit superaccept’ at or below 3♣ after the ♣ transfer is lost
* For previous minor suit Stayman (MSS) players
  + You will forego MSS. There is no particularly simple way around this.
* If you play something else, ask an expert

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3WGT

How It Works:

3WGT applies after any of the following auctions\*

Partner You

1♠ 2♠

1♥ 2♥

1♣/♦ 1♥/♠

2♥/♠ (raise)

\*For players not using a Walsh style response system over 1♣ openings, the auction

1♣ 1♦

1♥/♠ 2♥/♠ (raise)

applies as well.

The next available bid shows an invitational or better hand with shortness somewhere. All other calls show side suits with invitational or better values. Re-raising the suit shows invitational values and asks for extra trump length or a quality trump holding.

So, after 1♠-2♠;

2N Unspecified Shortness, Game Try

3♣ 4+♣, Game Try

3♦ 4+♦, Game Try

3♥ 4+♥, Game Try

3♠ Game Try; Accept w/ superb ♠ holding

To find out the shortness, bid the next step as a relay. In reply, bid the shortness, or rebid the trump suit to show shortness in the strain of the relay. After a suit showing game try, accept with maximum values or concentration in the game try suit.

After 1♠-2♠; 2N-

3♣ asks for shortness

3♦ 0-1♦

3♥ 0-1♥

3♠ 0-1♣ (the strain of the relay, 3♣)

3♦ slam interest w/ ♦ control

3♥ slam interest w/ ♥ control

3♠ minimum values, no game interest

In the auction 1♥-2♥;

2♠ Unspecified Shortness, Game Try

2N asks for shortness

3♣ 0-1♣

3♦ 0-1♦

3♥ 0-1♠

3♣ slam interest w/ ♣ control

3♦ slam interest w/ ♦ control

3♥ minimum values, no game interest

2N 4+♠; Game Try

3♣ 4+♣; Game Try

3♦ 4+♦, Game Try

3♥ Game Try; Accept w/ superb ♥ holding

System Effects:

* For previous HSGT users
  + This is merely an improvement upon HSGT. If you previously used 2N as a balanced invitational hand, you will lose that.

Decision Doubles

How It Works:

The textbook auction is as follows:

N E S W

1♠ 2♥ 2♠ 3♥

X

North should be able to compete to 3♠ on a hand like

♠ KQTxxx ♥ xx ♦QJxx ♣x

But bid 3♠ to invite on a hand like

♠AQJxxx ♥xx ♦QJx ♣A

Obviously 3♠ cannot carry both meanings. This would result in responder (S) in a quandary what to do with, say

♠ xxxx ♥ x ♦Axxx ♣QJxx

The solution to this issue is to have N bid 3♠ on the first hand and X on the second hand. This allows partner to make a decision whether to

* Play in 3♠
* Play in 4♠
* Defend 3♥X

Decision doubles appear in many similarly “cramped” auctions. A few examples follow:

N E S W

1♥ 2♦ 2♥ 3♦

X

1♥ 2♠ 3♥ 3♠

X

1♥ 1♠ 2♥ 2♠

X

You may extend this concept to even further auctions. However, what is shown is considered normal.

System Effects:

* Loss of the penalty double in the above auctions.

Of course, occasionally responder may pass, but not always at the right time.

* For those who elect to adopt decision doubles in auctions like:

N E S W

1♠ 2♣ 2♠ 3♣

X

All other new suit invites (3♦/3♥) should be unbalanced. Decision doubles take on more balanced invitational hand types.

- From a theoretical perspective, 3N should not exist in these auctions. It should be left to the individual partnerships in determining the best use for it.

- Many pairs may find confusion in determining when a double is takeout vs. decision vs. penalty. It would be best to play only the auctions written above until firm agreement is reached on extended applications.

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Reverse Drury

How It Works: When partner opens light in third seat, it is important to be able to determine how light he is when preparing to invite. Take the following two hands, for example:

♠KQJxx ♠Axx

♥xxx ♥Jxx

♦Jx ♦KQxxx

♣Kxx ♣xx

1♠ 3♠

P

Down one, maybe two if the ♣A is offside. But if opener’s hand better, 3 or 4♠ would make routinely.

In order to stay at the two level, 2♣ after a major opening is used as an invitational raise in the major. So

P 1♥

2♣

And

P 1♠

2♣

Show 9-11 with 3+card support.

After Drury, opener

* Rebids his suit with a subminimum hand
* Bids 2♦ with a normal opener
* Bids anything beyond rebidding his suit at the two level to show slam interest & values in the suit bid

So after P-1♥; 2♣-

2♦ Normal opening values

2♥ Subminimum opening values

2♠ Slam interest, ♠ values

2N Slam interest, balanced

3♣ Slam interest, ♣ values

3♦ Slam interest, ♦ values

3♥ Slam interest, demands partner to cuebid

Many modifications to Reverse Drury exist. Among the many possibilities are:

* Two Way Reverse Drury (2♣ and 2♦ responses show limit raises, with 3 and 4 card support respectively)
* After P-1♠; 2♣-, 2♦ shows a subminimum with 4♥, 2♥ shows a normal opening, and 2♠ shows a subminimum without 4♥
* Using the first step after the suit rebid (2N after P-1♠; 2♣ and 2♠ after P-1♥; 2♣) as a slam invitational ask for distribution

System Effects:

* The loss of the natural 2♣ after a major suit opening. Most players cope by using 2N or 3♣ to show this hand type.
* Openings of 1♥/♠ in 3rd seat can safely be extremely light when partner has a fit. Obviously, if you were going to open every 8 count in 3rd seat, you wouldn’t be advised to play penalty doubles after a 1N overcall or aggressively inviting without a fit.

Inverted Minors

How It Works: In the following auctions:

Partner You

1♦ 2♦

1♣ 2♣

Your raise shows 4+ card support and invitational or better values. A jump raise to the 3 level would be preemptive.

From here there are many flavors as to what opener’s rebids look like. The majority of players use either

* Opener and responder bid stoppers (QTx or better) to determine whether 3N has play. When a suit is found unstopped, a non-jump to 4m is to play. 3m at any point shows a minimum hand.
* Opener and responder pattern their hands. Bids show real suits, amounts of NT are balanced. 3m at any point shows a minimum hand.
* Opener has artificial options. The first step shows a minimum with shortness or any FG (4441). The 2nd step shows a balanced hand w/o all suits stopped. The 3rd step (not 2N or rebidding the suit) shows a balanced FG with a 5+ card minor

From a practical standpoint, option (1) is effective, as 3N is the primary objective in a minor fit auction. The trouble with option (2) is that values are usually, but not always, in long suits. However, distributional knowledge would be just as critical as stoppers in finding close slams. Additionally, option (3), while well rounded, does not provide excellent means to stop at the three level.

As an aside, many good players use some other bid (usually 2♥ or 3♣ after 1♦, for example) to show the invitational raise. This allows the inverted raise to be quasi-FG (i.e. FG unless the values and stoppers lack for 3N). Utilizing the jump shift in the other minor, the more traditional of these two methods, is called Criss-Cross.

System Effects:

* The auction 1♣/♦-1N will include some nastier hands, like ♠xx ♥xxx ♦QTxx ♣KJTx, that don’t seem NT oriented.

Western Cuebids

How It Works: In certain situations, bidding either the opponent’s suit or an unbid suit asks for a full or half stopper in that suit. Within context, ‘certain situations’ can be defined as:

1. Playing inverted minors , bidding the last stopper
   1. 1♦-2♦; 2♥-2♠; 3♣
   2. 1♦-2♦; 2♠-3♣; 3♥
   3. 1♣-2♣; 2♥-2♠\* notice that opener implies a lack of ♦ control, so responder’s 2♠ implies ♦ and asks about ♠, since w/ both he’d just bid 3N
2. In competitive auctions after we open a minor suit opening and have no agreed major fit
   1. 1♦-(P)-1♠-(2♥); 3♦-(P)-3♥
   2. 1♣-(1♠)-2♠-(P); 3♣-(P)-3♠\* Ask Ron/Linda
   3. 1♦-(P)-1♥-(2♠); 3♠

System Effects:

* There is no particular definition on the majority of these bids in any system.
* Some confusion may ensue whether or not a cuebid is a raise of partner’s suit vs. western in nature. The meta rules outlined above should resolve most ambiguity. In particular, the auction

(1♦) 1♠ (2♦) 3♦

Is NOT western. See rule B, the guideline that our side has to open the minor

Multi Landy & DON’T

How It Works: These are two of the best conventions to use after your opponents open 1NT. There are, of course, a multitude of others. These are by far the most popular among experts in the modern game.

Multi Landy DONT

X Penalty 1 Suit

2♣ ♥+♠ ♣+ other

2♦ ♥ or ♠ ♦+ other

2♥ ♥+minor ♥+♠

2♠ ♠+minor ♠ (competitive values)

2N ♣+♦ ♣+♦ (strong)

Responses

X

P P

2♣ 2♣

2♦ 2♦

2♥ 2♥

2♠ 2♠

2♣

P Weak; long ♣ P signoff; ♣ preference

2♦ relay; = M length 2♦ p/c; 0-2♣ (occ. 3-4♣ w/ 4+♥ 4+♠)

2♥ signoff 2♥ 6+♥ s/o

2♠ signoff 2♠ 6+♠ s/o

2N inv+ relay 2N inv+ relay

2♦

P P signoff; ♦ preference

2♥ p/c 2♥ p/c

2♠ p/c; but inv. in ♥ 2♠ p/c, but inv. opposite ♥ +♦

2N inv+ relay 2N inv+ relay

2♥

P signoff; ♥ preference P signoff; ♥ preference

2♠ 6+♠; f1 2♠ signoff; ♠ preference

2N p/c minor; invitational+ 2N inv+ relay

3♣ p/c minor; minimum 3♣ 6+♣ f1

2♠

P signoff; ♠ preference P signoff; ♠ preference

2N p/c minor; invitational+ 2N inv+ relay

3♣ p/c minor; minimum 3♣ 6+♣ f1

2N

P -- P --

3♣ signoff 3♣ signoff

3♦ signoff 3♦ signoff

System Effects:

* The structure replaces whatever your current methods were. These are both significant improvements upon natural bidding.
* With regard to DON’T, you lose the ability to double for penalty. This does not, however, prevent you from showing very strong two suited holdings. Consider doubling, then bidding 2N+ to show a two suited hand.

Washington 2♣

How It Works: Playing 2/1 FG, it is often difficult to bid slams without knowing responder’s distribution. A 2♣ or 2♦ response can be made on some ugly 4 card suits, moderate 5 cards suits, and extremely awesome 6 card suits.

In order to provide some more definition, many experts use 2♣ as an all purpose game force. This allows all other 2/1s to show 5+ cards

In summary

1♠ -

2♣ 5+♣ OR any balanced hand FG

2♦ 5+♦ FG

2♥ 5+♥ FG

1♥

2♣ 5+♣ OR any balanced hand FG

2♦ 5+♦ FG

After the “nebulous” 2♣ bid, there are several different schemes available for opener and responder to show their distributions. These are headed under their respective names, as it is perfectly acceptable to bid naturally after 2♣.

System Effects:

* 2/1s other than 2♣ become more refined
* The 2♣ response is given more hand types. This will occasionally make finding ♣ games/slams more difficult

Forcing Pass

How It Works:

There are some situations where it is unclear whether to bid on or double the opponents. Take the following 2/1 auction:

1♠ (P) 2♣ (2♥)

Opener may wish to do any of the following things :

* Raise clubs
* Rebid ♠s
* Rack up 500 against 2♥X
* Search for slam
* Bid 3N

Because the 2♣ call was FG, opener can pass to express doubt about where he wants to play the hand by passing. This is logical, as with enough values to force to game, the opposing partnership simply cannot have enough values to make their contract.

After opener makes a forcing pass, responder can

* X, suggesting collecting a penalty against 2♥X
* Bid a new suit, suggesting offensive strength , potentially with slam interest

Obviously, responder CANNOT PASS! He has to make a decision whether his side should play a contract or defend the opponent’s contract doubled.

Forcing passes are applicable in

* Any game forcing auctions
* The auction 1x (X) XX
* The auction 1N (2x) X (penalty)

Additionally, many experts have agreements that making a high level forcing pass and then bidding after partner’s double shows extra values. The specifics vary from partnership to partnership.

System Effects:

* None. When applied logically, forcing passes are only a systemic benefit.

Lebensohl & Variants of

How It Works:

The need for Lebensohl is best demonstrated visually. Sitting West you hold

♠Xx ♥Kxx ♦x ♣Kxxxxxx

N E S W

- 1N 2♠ ?

And feel inclined to bid 3♣. Good instincts. The next board you have

♠KT ♥x ♦KQT9 ♣QJTxxx

N E S W

- 1N 2♠ ?

Again, you have the right instincts in bidding 3♣. This is the best way to explore, since if partner has

♠Qxx ♥KQJx ♦Axxx ♣Kxx

3N is enough, but with

♠Axx ♥T9xx ♦Axxx ♣AK

6♣ is great, and

Since you cannot bid the same way with both hands effectively, 2N is used as a relay to 3♣ to describe other hand types. A complete scheme might look as follows:

N E S W

- 1N 2♠ ?

X Penalty (or Takeout, whichever your partnership prefers)

2N Forces 3♣

3♣ Forced

P 5+♣ < FG

3♦ 5+♦ < FG

3♥ 5+♥ < FG

3♠ 4♥ ♠ stopper FG

3N <4♥ ♠ stopper

3♣ 5+♣ FG

3♦ 5+♦ FG

3♥ 5+♥ FG

3♠ 4♥ no ♠ stopper FG

3N <4♥ no ♠ stopper FG

Notice that

* With hands resembling normal raises to 3N or Stayman inquiries, showing them through 2N IMPLIES a stopper in the opponent’s suit. Showing them directly DENIES a stopper in the opponent’s suit. This helps you avoid 3N on the following set of hands:

♠Jx ♥Axx ♦AJxxx ♣KQJ

♠xxx ♥KQJx ♦KQxx ♣xx

Where you would prefer to play in the Moysian ♥ fit.

* Bidding a new suit via 2N implies WEAKNESS. Direct suit bids show GAME FORCING values

Lebensohl is playable over any overcall. There are, of course, a couple things to consider:

After a 2♣ overcall

3♣ is the only “Stayman” cuebid. I recommend opener responds as follows:

3♦ no stopper (then responder bids the major he doesn’t have, or 3N with both)

3♥ 4♥ ♣ stopper

3♠ 4♠ <4♥ ♣ stopper

3N no 4M, ♣ stopper

Again, this allows the partnership to play somewhere other than a doomed 3N.

After a 2♦ overcall

3♥ and 3♠ can be bid two different ways:

2N…3♥/♠

3♥/♠ (direct)

I suggest that, for consistency, the delayed actions be invitational, allowing the direct actions to be FG.

The astute reader may notice that invitational hands cannot be shown. There are two ways to combat this:

1. Decide to upgrade/downgrade invitational hands as seen most appropriate
2. Play Transfer Lebensohl (described below)

N E S W

- 1N 2♠ ?

X Penalty (or takeout, whichever the partnership prefers)

2N Forces 3♣

3♣ Forced

P 5+♣ <INV

3♦ 5+♦ <INV

3♥ 5+♥ <INV

3♠ 4♥ ♠ stopper FG

3N <4♥ ♠ stopper

3♣ 5+♦ INV+

3♦ 5+♥ INV+

3♥ 5+♣ INV+

3♠ 4♥ no ♠ stopper FG

3N <4♥ no ♠ stopper FG

Opener accepts the transfer to suggest a minimum hand. Continuations thereafter put the partnership in a game force.

System Effects:

* 2N is lost as a natural invitational bid. In bridge, this is generally a very minimal loss, if not any loss at all. Generally speaking, 2N is never a great contract to play. With the values to make 2N effectively, a partnership will usually either have another makeable contract or a profitable penalty against the opposition.
* Some definition on invitational hands is lost. If you are playing Transfer Lebensohl, this effect is lessened significantly.
* Minor suit games will occasionally be overbid due to the FG nature of direct bids by responder.
* Transfer Lebensohl players will occasionally find themselves in a 5-2 fit at the three level. Not always easy to play, but (usually) the values are there.