

♠7
♥AKQJ7
♦AKJ9
♣AQ8

How Well do You and Your Partner Understand Each Other? Bidding when You Open Two Clubs

By Mike Lawrence

You are the dealer and you give yourself this pleasant hand. Since your strong opening bid is two clubs, you start with that. Do you have agreements on what partner's various bids mean? For instance, what would partner show if he bid 2D or 2H or 2NT? What does he have if he bids 3C or 3D?

West	East
2C	2D

You bid two clubs and East responds two diamonds. In your methods, which of these hands qualify for a two diamond bid? And, if any of these hands do not bid two diamonds, what DO they bid?

HAND 1
♠K 9 5 4
♥6 2
♦Q 7 3
♣K J 7 4

HAND 2
♠J 8 5 4 3 2
♥6
♦8 4 3
♣10 5 3

HAND 3
♠A K J
♥9 6 3
♦Q 3 2
♣J 6 3 2

HAND 4

♠K Q 10 8 4
♥8 5 3
♦6 5 2
♣K 2

There are many ways to respond to a two club bid. You can show your points by bidding in steps.

You can show controls artificially.

You can play that 2D shows six or more points and 2H shows a true bust.

Or, you can play that 2D says only that you do not have a descriptive bid to make. You may have some points, but no way to show them now. On hands where you have a bust, you will show that fact on the second round.

This last method is by far the easiest to play and since it has a lot of merit, I will use it as the guideline for the four hands shown above.

HAND 1

♠K 9 5 4
♥6 2
♦Q 7 3
♣K J 7 4

Bid two diamonds. You do not have a suit to show. The only bid you have to show points is two notrump. In this regard, I recommend you NEVER bid two notrump in response to an opening two club bid. It takes away bidding room, plus it can make the wrong hand declarer. Respond two diamonds and leave opener room to show his hand.

HAND 2

♠J 8 5 4 3 2
♥6
♦8 4 3
♣10 5 3

Bid two diamonds. Your spades are not biddable and your hand is too weak. Maybe you can show the spades later.

HAND 3

♠A K J
♥9 6 3
♦Q 3 2
♣J 6 3 2

Even with this fine a hand, start with two diamonds. I offer the strong suggestion that you do not bid two notrump to show points. Bidding two notrump takes up important bidding room. You will do better by bidding two diamonds, which lets opener start to show his hand, and then you can make a forward-going bid on the next round.

Truly, I hate bidding two notrump and I hate hearing partner bid it. You can find players who do bid two notrump and who claim that it solves some of their problems, but it has yet to solve any for me. Usually, it just gets in the way of our bidding.

HAND 4

♠K Q 10 8 4
♥8 5 3
♦6 5 2
♣K 2

Finally, a hand that should not bid two diamonds. Bid two spades. This bid promises a biddable suit and usually six points or more. The only question is, how good a suit do you promise? Some play that any two of the top three honors in a five card suit is OK. I think that might be restrictive. KJxxx or even QJxxx makes sense. K10xxx and A10xxx need to be discussed.

Continuing with the auction. You opened the nice hand I gave you (to the left) with two clubs and heard a two diamond bid from partner.

2C 2D
2H ?

How does partner tell you that he has a genuinely bad hand? What do 2S, 2NT, 3C, 3D, 3H, and 4H show?

In the structure I recommend, partner shows you a worthless hand by bidding three clubs. Partner can have as many as four points, but they will be terrible ones. The other bids are natural and show some values.

What should these hands bid after your two heart rebid? How will they continue? In a couple of these cases, the answer may surprise you.

Hand 1

♠K 9 8 6 2
♥3 2
♦Q 7 3
♣10 6 4

Bid two spades. This is minimum for the bid. You might have a better hand for this. Still, since it is convenient to show spades now, you should do so. Partner will know you don't have better spades since you could have bid them over two clubs.

Hand 2

♠10 8 5 4 3
♥6 4 3 2
♦Q 8
♣9 2

Jump to four hearts. This is the traditional bid to show trump support and a poor hand with no first or second round controls. This means no aces, kings, voids, or singletons. This is a very useful bid and should not be forgotten. NOTE. If you use the Expert Tricks shown in the last three hands, you can have the understanding that a jump to game promises a little distribution and not a genuinely terrible hand. The hand here has two high card points, but it has good shape. It is not a 4-3-3-3 dog.

Hand 3

♠Q 8 3 2
♥10 3
♦Q 7 4
♣K 6 4 3

Bid two notrump. This is forwardgoing. You promise six or so points with no upper limit.

Hand 4

♠K Q 6
♥6 3
♦Q 8 5 3
♣K 6 5 3

Bid two notrump here too. Don't leap to three notrump just to show an extra point or two. The cost of a round of bidding is too great.

Hand 5

♠A Q 8 6

♥10 9 4

♦4 3

♣10 7 6 3

Raise to three hearts. You show a hand worth a nice six points. If you use one of the Expert Tricks from the end of this article, you can have the agreement that the raise to three hearts shows a decent hand and not a scroungy six count with no real merit.

Hand 6

♠A 10 5 4 2

♥10 5 4 3

♦Q 2

♣K 3

Bid three hearts. You may end up in a grand or a small slam. Bidding three hearts leaves room for cue-bidding.

Hand 7

♠Q 9 5

♥4 3

♦10 6 5 4 2

♣9 5 3

Bid three clubs. This is an alert showing a bad hand for sure. You should not bid three clubs if you have real values. The range for this is zero up to a four or five count, depending on its quality.

Hand 8

♠Q 8 6

♥8

♦Q 10 8 7 5

♣K 6 4 3

Bid three diamonds. This is natural. Since you didn't bid three diamonds on the first round, you are showing a so-so suit. You should have six or more points for this.

Hand 9

♠Q 8 6

♥8

♦Q 10 7 6

♣K 10 7 6 4

You would like to bid three clubs, but that bid shows a dud. Bid two notrump. Not perfect, but at least it does tell partner you have some points. If you are lucky, your partner will bid three clubs or diamonds.

Expert Hands 10, 11, & 12.

Hand 10

♠Q J 3

♥J 6 3

♦Q 5 4

♣J 10 6 5

Bid two notrump. You have enough points to raise hearts, but your points are terrible. By bidding two notrump, you tell partner you aren't broke, and then when you go back to hearts, you will imply you have support points but not good ones. Say your partner rebids three notrump or bids three diamonds over two notrump. Now you can jump to game in hearts, giving the message that you have something but no enthusiasm.

Hand 11

♠K 9 8 5

♥10 6 5 2

♦Q 5 4 3

♣2

For anyone who likes splinter bids, this one is perfect. Bid four clubs. You show a singleton club, heart support, and at least six support points. You can do this with three card support.

Hand 12

♠10 6 5

♥5 4 3 2

♦7 6 4

♣J 7 3

Bid three clubs, telling partner you have nothing. As the auction progresses, you will keep returning to hearts. Having warned partner that you are broke, you won't have to worry that he will get excited.

This is an important hand.

If your current solution is to bid four hearts, your partner will have to guess whether you have this worthless hand or the hand shown earlier, Hand 2 (108543, 7643, Q8, 92), which is a bad hand but a bad hand with some redemption.

Remember, the bidding on all of these hands starts out the same:

2C 2D

2H ?