

Strong Opening Bids

In Standard English there are three types of strong opening bid.

Opening 2♣ is the strongest bid in the Acol system, showing 23+ HCP or a game going hand. Make a *negative response* of 2♦ if your hand contains *neither*; 8 HCP or more with at least one ace or king, or an ace and a king. With a balanced hand of 8+ HCP, respond 2NT or with a good 5-card suit, respond in that suit.

A rebid by opener of 2NT (showing 23-24 HCP) is the **only** rebid that can be passed by responder with a very poor hand (0-2 HCP). **All other bids are forcing to game.** 3♣ is Stayman.

Opening 2NT shows a balanced hand with 20-22 HCP. A 5-card major is acceptable. It can be passed but any response by partner is forcing to game. 3♣ would again be Stayman. 3♥ and 3♠ are forcing. There is no weak takeout opposite a 2NT opening.

Opening bids of 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠ show at least eight playing tricks and a hand that would be concerned about missing game if partner were to pass an opening bid at the one level. These opening bids are forcing for one round and should also have at least two defensive tricks. 2NT is the negative (the same as a 2♦ response to a 2♣ opening). After a negative response of 2NT opener may bid a new suit which is forcing for one round. A return to opener's first suit is not forcing, so responder should bid game with any helpful looking cards. Other responses are natural, positive and forcing to game. A single raise is forcing, showing 3+ card support and at least one ace. A double raise denies an ace but shows trump support and a couple of useful features, such as a king or a singleton. With a weaker hand, start with 2NT and show the support later.

What would you open with these hands and what would your *rebid* be if partner makes a negative response?

1	2	3	4
♠ A K Q 10 9 7 6 2	♠ A Q	♠ A K Q	♠ A K Q J 9 7 6 4 2
♥ A	♥ A K J 7	♥ K Q 10 2	♥ 3 2
♦ 9 7 6	♦ K Q J	♦ Q J 10	♦ A K
♣ Q	♣ A Q 9 8	♣ A K 9	♣ -

1 - **2♠**. With 9 playing tricks but only 15 HCP you are not strong enough to open **2♣**. Your rebid to a response of 2NT would be **3♠** , encouraging but not forcing.

2 – **2♣**. With 26 HCP bid strongly. Your rebid over partner's **2♦** negative would be **3NT** showing 25-27 HCP.

3 – **2♣**. With 24 HCP rebid **2NT** over partner's **2♦** response. This is not forcing. **3♣** would now be Stayman.

4 – **2♣**. With 17 HCP and 11 tricks with spades as trumps, you do not want to stop before game is reached. A **2♠** rebid over partner's negative **2♦** is ***forcing to game***. It cannot be passed below game.