



B3 L04 Very Strong Unbalanced Hands NOTES

Opening Very Strong Balanced Hands

20-22
HCPs



2NT



Announced
(eg. "Twenty to Twenty-Two")

Players agree to use an opening bid of 2♣ as an artificial bid showing a hand that is so strong that the partnership are going to bid at least a game contract.

This sort of bid is often described as "game forcing".

23+
HCPs



2♣



Alerted

It's normal for partners to agree that a balanced hand with 20 or more HCPs may contain a five-card major. If the distribution of the cards in the hand is 4443; 4432; or 5422, it is balanced.

Opening Very Strong Unbalanced Hands

An unbalanced hand may draw its power from the quantity of honour cards AND/OR from its distribution.

The number of "playing" or "quick" tricks is often used to assess the strength of a distributional when choosing an opening bid.



B3 L04 Very Strong Unbalanced Hands NOTES

Estimating Playing Tricks

Hand 1

♠ 10 9 8

♥ A K Q 10 9 8 7

♦ 3

♣ 7 4

This hand is unbalanced, has nine HCP, has SIX / SEVEN playing tricks in hearts. It's suitable for a three level pre-empt.

Hand 2

♠ 10 9 8

♥ A K Q 10 9 7

♦ 3 2

♣ 7 4

This hand is unbalanced, has nine HCP, has Five / Six playing tricks in hearts.

It's suitable for a "weak two".



B3 L04 Very Strong Unbalanced Hands NOTES

Hand 3

♠ 10 9 8

♥ A K Q J 10 9 8

♦ A

♣ 7 4

This hand is unbalanced, has 14 HCP, has seven playing tricks in hearts and A♦ = Eight Playing Tricks.

Hand 4

♠ 10 9 8

♥ A K Q J 10 9 8

♦ A

♣ A 4

This hand is unbalanced, has 18 HCP, has NINE playing tricks in hearts.

Use a game-forcing opening bid.



B3 L04 Very Strong Unbalanced Hands NOTES

Hand 5

♠ J 10 9 8

♥ A K Q 4 3

♦ K Q

♣ K Q

This hand is unbalanced, has 20 HCP, has FIVE playing tricks in hearts. You can add two more for the KQ holdings in diamonds and clubs. It should be opened either

2NT

or else at the one level in hearts.

Hand 6

♠ 10 9

♥ A K Q J 5 4 3 2

♦ 7

♣ 6 5

This hand is unbalanced, has 10 HCP, has EIGHT? playing tricks in hearts.

Open 4♥



B3 L04 Very Strong Unbalanced Hands NOTES

Hand 7

♠ 10 9 8

♥ A K Q J 10 9 8 7

♦ A

♣ 4

This hand is unbalanced, has 14 HCP, has NINE playing tricks in hearts. Use a game-forcing opening bid.

2♣

8 Playing Tricks: Bidding an Acol "Strong 2"

You may use a "natural" method.

Auction 1 (Pure Acol)

N

E

S

W



2♠



"Strong"

The agreement with partner is that the opening bid of 2♠ shows eight clear tricks in spades.



B3 L04 Very Strong Unbalanced Hands NOTES

Alternatively, you may use 2♥ and 2♠ for weak hands.

This is a common variation on the Acol system known as Benjaminised Acol or “Benji”.

You need a different bidding sequence to show the strong 2.

Auction 2 (Benji)

N E S W



2♣



2♦

2♠

The agreement is that the opening of 2♣ shows eight clear tricks in an unknown suit or, e.g., 19-20 HCP, balanced hand.

The 2♦ is a relay bid, allowing the opener to bid naturally next.

Either of these sequences tells partner that the opener can take eight tricks exactly in the nominated suit.

It is not usually forcing, if the responder has nothing, they pass.

However, if they can add two tricks to a strong 2 opener in a major, they will raise to game.

Some partnerships will bid 2NT with little or no support for opener, but 6-10 HCPs, and seeking a second suit.



B3 L04 Very Strong Unbalanced Hands NOTES

Or you may use 2♥, 2♠, AND 2♦ for weak hands

Auction 3 (Three Weak Twos)

N E S W



2♣



2♦

2♠

The agreement is that the opening of 2♣ shows intermediate to game force strength.

The partnership must bid further to tell a strong 2 from a more powerful hand.



B3 L04 Very Strong Unbalanced Hands NOTES

9+ Playing Tricks: Use a game force opening bid

Auction 4 (Pure Acol)

N E S W

 2♣



The agreement with partner is that the opening bid of 2♣ shows nine or more clear tricks in an unknown suit or, e.g. 23+ HCP, any distribution.



2♦

The 2♦ is a “negative” bid, showing less than 8HCP and allowing the opener to bid again.

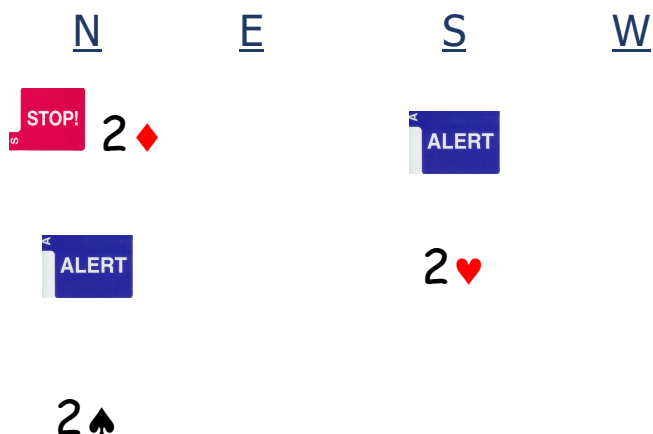
2♠

2♠ shows a five+ card spade suit, forcing to game.



B3 L04 Very Strong Unbalanced Hands NOTES

Auction 5 (Benjaminised Acol)



The agreement is that the opening bid of 2♦ shows nine or more clear tricks in an unknown suit or, e.g. 23+ HCP, any distribution.

The 2♥ is a “negative” bid, showing less than 8HCP and allowing the opener to bid again.

Either of these sequences tells partner the opener can take nine or more tricks in a yet unknown suit, or has 23+HCP, and does not wish the bidding to subside before reaching a game contract.



B3 L04 Very Strong Unbalanced Hands NOTES

Game Force Opening Auctions

Responding to a game force opening




The next bid "up" is a negative showing less than eight high card points. But a holding of seven high card points in the form of an ace and a king, is treated as positive.

Any other response shows eight or more high card points.

Bidding a suit shows five or more cards in that suit. Otherwise bid no trumps.

What if the responder has a very poor hand?

Auction 6 (Pure Acol)

N	E	S	W
	 2♣		
			2♦
	2NT		P

West




♠ J 10 9
 ♥ 5 4 3
 ♦ 7 6 5 4
 ♣ 7 6 5

If the opener re-bids 2NT, and the responder has zero or one high card point in a balanced hand, then it is correct to pass.



B3 L04 Very Strong Unbalanced Hands NOTES

Auction 7 (Pure Acol)

N	E	S	W
	 2♣		
			2♦
	2♥		2NT

West

♠	J 10 9
♥	5 4 3
♦	7 6 5 4
♣	7 6 5




If the opener re-bids 2 of a suit, and the responder has zero or one high card point in a balanced hand, then responder re-bids 2NT, known as the "double negative",

and opener has the option of passing.

Negative Response with 3+ HCP and/or five-card plus suit

In any other case, the pair should not stop bidding until a game contract is reached.

Auction 8 (Pure Acol)

N	E	S	W
	 2♣		
			2♦
	2♥		3♥
	4♥		P
	P		

West

♠	J 10 9
♥	Q 4 3
♦	K 6 5 4
♣	7 6 5



B3 L04 Very Strong Unbalanced Hands NOTES

Following a positive response

The partnership is going for a slam contract.

Auction 9 (Pure Acol)

N E S W

 2♣



2NT

3♥

4♥

6♥

Pass

Pass

West

♠ J 10 9

♥ A 4 3

♦ K 6 5 4

♣ 7 6 5

Splinter bids, Cue bids or Slam bidding methods may be used to get the best score out of the deal. They are covered later.

There are regulations about the way you describe your strong unbalanced openings. Might be worth looking up if you play a bit seriously.