

Bridge News

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News for Serious Duplicate Bridge Players

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The “Undercall” ♣ Convention - Extended

Provided by Neil H. Timm

How many times have the opponents opened a club and you have overcalled a major and then they negative double to show the other major? Or, you make an overcall and win the contract and the weak hand is on lead? Is there a convention that you can use that can prevent the often used negative double or ensure that the strong hand leads? The answer is YES, but before discussing the convention lets look at an example.

In the second seat, after the bid of one club, you pick up at favorable vulnerability the following hand:

♠AQJ873 ♥432 ♦J87 ♣A what do you bid?

With an opening hand and six spades, most would overcall a spade to show a good suit and lead directing! However, if you win the contract, the

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Bridge Notes

Do not switch Seats. Why?

In many Club games with Howell movements, some club members turn the card instead of switching directions. When the new pair arrives, they may have switched their positions, for example from North to South or vice versa!

This practice is not allowed per Law 90 of the ACBL Duplicate Bridge Laws. The Director may impose a procedural penalty. You may get an average minus if you switch.

The Law states that once receiving a compass direction, a player may only change it within a session only upon instruction or with the permission of the director. It is the law.

Special Carding Please Ask.

Marking this on your Convention Card is not a way to circumvent ACBL regulations. For example, it may be used if you play coded 9's and 10's, but it may not be used to play, for example, odd/even discards on leads. The odd/even discard may only be used on each defender's first discard.

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weak hand is on lead. In many situations it is better to get the strong hand on lead. Thus you want your partner to play the contract. To accomplish this goal you may use the “Undercall” Club convention which is based upon transfers.

The convention applies ONLY over the opening bid of 1♣. In the second (overcall) seat your overcall bids are: Opener 1♣

Your bids are:

1♦ = transfer to hearts (5+ hearts and 1st or 2nd round control)

1♥ = transfer to spades (5+ spades and 1st or 2nd round control)

1♠ = transfer to diamonds (should have 10 – 14 HCP with an ace or king) **NOTE: May be played to transfer to Notrump, usually with a club stopper since playing in a minor may not be attractive.**

1NT = shortness in clubs and 8-14 HCP (Optional* --- for takeout)

X= 15+ HCP with stopper in clubs (Optional*)

2♣=both majors and weak 8-11HCP

2♦ = Flannery or Extra-Shape Flannery (Optional --- depends on partnership agreement).

2♥ = transfer to spades (5/6+ spades and strong 16-21 HCP)

2♠ = 5-5 in the majors and strong (16-21 HCP)

2NT = 5+hearts and 5+diamonds (Optional).

* Some partnerships reverse the meaning of these bids – then 1NT is 15/16-17/18 usually with a stopper and double is for takeout.

That is it! What do you gain by using the transfer bids?

1) You get partner to declare the hand in your long suit, putting the strong hand opening bidder on lead.

2) With diamonds you preempt their one-level

overcall by bidding 1♠.

3) You escape a penalty double if partner happens to hold length in the suit you bid and shortness in the suit you have shown.

4) You get to make two bids (usually) for the price of one, since most of the time partner will bid your suit or something else and you get to make another bid (standard transfer advantage).

5) By transferring into your major suit, it may take away their negative double.

Now let’s look at the complete deal and employ our new “Undercall” club convention.

North	
♠ AQJ873	
♥ 432	
♦ J87	
♣ A	
West	East
♠ 2	♠ 64
♥ AQ75	♥ J 108
♦ KQ10	♦ 654
♣ K10973	♣ Q8642
South	
♠ K1095	
♥ K96	
♦ A9322	
♣ J5	

Not playing the Undercall Club Convention, North would overcall a spade and N-S would reach a part score or game in spades and make eight or nine tricks with east leading the jack of hearts.

Playing the Undercall Club Convention, the bidding would proceed as follows.

West	North	East
South		
1♣	1♥*	Pass
1♠		
Pass	3♥**	Pass
4♣		
All Pass		

*Alert

**Help suit game try – alert

Or, one may bid:

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♥*	Pass	2♠#
Pass	3♣@	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

*Alert

Super accept

@cue bid

With south playing the contract, west leads the king of diamonds. South wins the ace, cashes the ace of clubs, leads a trump to hand and ruffs a club, draws a second trump and leads a diamond toward dummy; ending in hand. A heart is discarded on the 13th diamond. If west started with two diamonds, he is end-played. If west started with four diamonds, he gets out with a diamond and declarer wins the jack, leads a third trump to hand and plays a diamond, throwing a heart. Now west is end-played. Four spades bid and made --- but only from the south side.

It is true that even if South plays the hand, a club or spade lead with defeat 4♠, but only if west defends perfectly. After winning the first round of diamonds, he must shift to a heart, leading away from AQxx. It is not that easy!

What do you lose by playing the Undercall club Convention?

You lose the ability to hear partner bid 1♥ or 1♠ as he could after a 1♦ overcall. Also, if you bid 1♠ with diamonds, committing your side to the two level, you will need a better diamond suit than for a 1♦ overcall.

As in Precision, can you refuse the transfer? Yes, if they pass, bid 1NT without a fit (a void or only one card in the transfer suit, with two/three cards – accept the transfer). Or, you can bid your own 5+ suit. And, if they interfere you can pass without support, or perhaps bid your own suit. Finally, you can bid 2♣ to ask overcaller to bid his second suit.

Let's look at few more examples: The opponents' open 1♣ and you hold the following hands:

(1) ♠ 975 ♥ A75 ♦ AK1096 ♣ 75

(2) ♠ K75 ♥ A75 ♦ AK1096 ♣ 75

(3) ♠ A75 ♥ A75 ♦ AK1096 ♣ 75

For hand (1) you would bid 1♠ as a transfer to diamonds (lead directing); however, with hand (2) you would bid 1NT as takeout (tells partner you have an opening hand and can support all suits), and with hand (3) you would double. You would reverse your bids in hands (2) and (3) if you play 1NT as a strong hand, and double for takeout!

Finally, with the following hand: ♠ AKQJ7 ♥ 7 ♦ 987652 ♣ A, you would bid 1♥ and (if necessary) perhaps bid diamonds later (e.g. if partner bid 2♣).

This is the basic Undercall Club “Transfer” Convention; it is best played only over a ONE CLUB OPENING BID (Provided the club bid is not the strong Precision Club).

However, you may also play transfers over other 1-level opening as follows.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THEY OPEN 1♦? Can we extend the transfer bids? Yes!

One can again use transfer bids:

Opener	You
1♦	1♥ = transfer to spades (5+ spades and 1 st or 2 nd round control) 1♠ = transfer to clubs (should have 10 – 14 HCP with an ace or king) NOTE: May be played to transfer to Notrump, usually with a diamond stopper.
	1NT = shortness in diamonds and 8-14 HCP (Optional* --- for takeout) X= 15+ HCP with shortness in diamonds (Optional*)
	2♦=both majors (Optional) 2♥ = transfer to spades (5/6+ spades and strong 16-21 HCP) 2♠ = 5-5 in the majors and strong (16-21 HCP) 2NT = 5+hearts and 5+diamonds (Optional).

* Some partnerships reverse the meaning of these bids – then 1NT is 15-17 and double is for takeout.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THEY OPEN 1♥?

Opener	You
1♥	1♠ = transfer to clubs (should have 10 – 14 HCP with an ace or king) NOTE: May be played to transfer to Notrump, usually with a heart stopper.
	1NT = shortness in hearts and 8-14 HCP (Optional* --- for takeout) X= 15+ HCP with stopper in hearts (Optional*)
	2♥=spades and a minor (Optional) 2NT = 5+clubs and 5+diamonds (Optional). 3♥ = transfer to spades (5/6+ and strong 16-21 HCP)

* Some partnerships reverse the meaning of these bids – then 1NT is 15-17 and double is for takeout.

AND FINALLY if they Open 1♠

Opener	You
1♠	1NT = shortness in hearts and 8-14 HCP (Optional* --- for takeout) X= 15+ HCP with shortness in diamonds (Optional*)
	2♠=hearts and a minor (Optional) 2NT = 5+clubs and 5+diamonds (Optional).

* Some partnerships reverse the meaning of these bids – then 1NT is 15-17 and double is for takeout.

The convention proposed here is an extension of the Undercall club convention discussed in the book: "Bridge Conventions in Depth" (2003) by Matthew & Pamela Granovetter's. Master Point Press. This is a Mid-Chart Convention. It may not be played in Club Games without permission.

BIDDING PROBLEM

Provided by James "Jimmy" Klein, Pittsburgh PA (on the bridge site: www.pittsburghbridge.org)

My partner on Wednesday decided for his own reasons to bid 1NT with a singleton heart king and 16 points in first seat vulnerable against non vulnerable opponents. This brought him some unexpected bidding problems. Look at the hand and see if you feel the bidding is justified. We play an extended form of Stayman which allowed me to get the information I needed to propel us to the correct slam. I'll explain my bids and the responses. I sat south.

	♠- A J 4 3	
	♥- K	
	♦- Q J 10 4	
♠- 8 7	♣- K Q 4 2	♠- 10 9 6
♥- 10 7 6 4		♥- A Q J 8 3
♦- 7 5 2		♦- 9 8 6
♣- 9 7 6 3	♠- K Q 5 2	♣- 8 5
	♥- 9 5 2	
	♦- A K 3	
	♣- A J 10	

Bidding

N	E	S	W
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♣!	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♣!	Pass
4♥	Pass	6♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

With my 17 point 4 3 3 3 distribution facing a no trump opener it is not hard to imagine a slam. However, care must be taken - lest we have duplication. After the initial discovery of the 4 – 4 spade fit I felt that if partner also had 4 3 3 3 distribution the slam might play best at 6NT. The 3♣ bid asks if opener has another 4 card suit. 3♦ confirmed at least 4 diamonds. I knew now that there was at least one ruff available in

partner's hand. The 4♣ bid was correctly interpreted as Gerber and the slam was bid in 6♠ after we were off one ace. Notice what happens if the hand gambles 6NT with a heart Ace lead.

Playing either 2/1 (by opening 1♣ or 1♦) or Precision (by opening 1♣), one would easily reach the slam.

By opening 1NT strong, it is more difficult to reach the slam, unless you have “fancy” gadgets like Extended Stayman. In general, it is best to keep it simple and play by the generally accepted rules by not opening 1NT with a singleton (although ACBL rules do not prevent one from opening 1NT with a singleton).

Playing Precision, the bidding may go:

N	E	S	W
1♣	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♠	Pass
6♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

How would you bid the slam Playing 2/1?

An Extended Stayman Convention

Everyone plays the Stayman Convention; recall that the bidding goes:

1NT-2♣-2♦ = No four-card Major, 2♥ = Four Hearts, and 2♠ = Four Spades.

It is normal to bid 2♥ with both majors. After using Stayman, a 3♣ rebid by responder cancels the initial message and says that you want to play in clubs. This is not the case if you play Extended Stayman, as described here where now 3♣ initiates Extended Stayman (the French use it for Spring Stayman).

Because there are many versions of Extended Stayman, the one Developed by James (Jimmy) Klein is more complicated and will be reviewed in the next Newsletter. A simple variation of Extended Stayman follows:

After the sequence 1NT-2♣-2♠-3♣* = do you have another 4 card suit?

Opener's bids are 3♦=4diamonds; 3♠=5spades; 3NT=4clubs, 3♥ shows 4333 shape.

After the sequence 1NT-2♣-2♥-3♣*= do you have a four card suit?

Opener's bids are 3♦=4diamonds; 3♠ shows 3433 shape; 3NT=4clubs, 3♥=5hearts.

After the sequence 1NT-2♣-2♦-3♣* = do you have a four card suit?

Opener's bid of 3♦=some 5 card minor; and 3♥ by responder asks which 5 card minor; Opener responses are then: 3♠=clubs and 3NT=diamonds.

A bid of 3♥ (after 1NT-2♣-2♦-3♣*) by Opener shows a 2344 pattern (Major Fragments and both minors).

A bid of 3♠ (after 1NT-2♣-2♦-3♣*) by Opener shows a 3244 pattern.

A bid of 3NT (after 1NT-2♣-2♦-3♣*) shows one 4 card minor with 3334/3343 pattern over which one can ask by bidding 4♣ (where 4♦=diamond, 4♥=clubs). One now usually plays in a minor suit game or in a minor suit slam.

* Some bridge players use the bid of 3♦ after the bid of 2♦ to initiate an older version of Extended Stayman which is used to ask Opener to bid his better a three card major. Today, one would use the Mini-Maxi convention and not bid 2♣; instead after 1NT, one bids 3♥ to show 5-5 in majors and weak and the bid of 3♣ to show 5-5 in majors and strong. In addition, some use the bid of 3♣ for SARS (Shape Asking Relays after Stayman); SARS is similar to the version of Extended Stayman provided above and will be reviewed in the December 2009 issue of "Bridge News".

Another reason for not using 3♦ as Extended Stayman is that it may be used for Stayman in Doubt (SID) as discussed in the May 2008 issue of "Bridge News"; also discussed in that issue is Stayman with Super Accepts, and Garbage Stayman.

More on Wolff Sign-off with Checkback Stayman

Provided by Neil H. Timm

In the April 2007 issue of "Bridge News" we discussed the Wolff Sign-off Convention and Checkback Stayman based upon the book by Max Hardy (2002), Advance Bridge bidding for the 21st Century. New York: SQueeZe Books. However, all the responses to Checkback Stayman were not provided in Hardy's book. We now address this issue.

How many times have we heard the bidding sequence 1♣/1♦ - Pass - 1♥/1♠- Pass- 2NT. Many players will automatically bid 3NT over 2NT (with 8/9+ HCP) or Pass (with less than 8 HCP) since they do not play Wolff Sign-off or Checkback Stayman. In many cases this may lead to unmake able contracts!

Recall that playing Wolff Sign-off that a bid of 3♣ is a relay to 3♦ so that responder may sign-off in a long major with few points. The bid is used to prevent the Opener from bidding on. However, the bid of 3♦ is Checkback Stayman and forward going is used to fine a major fit!

If the responder bids 1♥ then the bids by opener after 2NT are (18+ HCP):

3♥ - I have three hearts, but do not have four spades
3♠ - I have four spades, but do not have three hearts
3NT – I have three hearts and four spades

If responder bid was 1♠ then the bids by opener are after 2NT (18+ HCP):

3♠ - I have three spades, but do not have four hearts
3♥ - I have four hearts, but do not have three spades
3NT – I have three spades and four hearts

You should only use the Checkback bid when you have 8/9+ HCP, and have a five card major or are either 4-4 or 5-4 in the majors.

While we considered several responder hands in the April 2007 issue of "Bridge News" we did not provide the hand of the Opener and the Responder. We now look at an example:

Both Non-Vulnerable and we have the following hands:

North	South
♠ A Q 5 6	♠ K 4 3 2
♥ J 10	♥ K Q 7 6
♦ A 5 3	♦ 8 2
♣ A K 4 3	♣ 5 7 9

Playing Checkback Stayman, the bidding is as:

North	South
1♣	1♥
2NT	3♦
3♠	4♠

South bids 3♦ to “Checkback for a major fit” with 8HCP. The pair finds their spade fit. Not playing Checkback Stayman, South may bid 3NT after 2NT, and if the opponents lead a diamond, the contract almost surely would not succeed.

If south had the following hand: ♠ K J 4 3 2 ♥ 7 6 3 2 ♦ 8 2 ♣ 5 7 9, he would again bid 1♠ and after the bid of 2NT bid 3♣ as a relay to 3♦ (Wolff Sign-off) and then bid 3♠. Not playing this convention, passing and playing in 2NT would certainly not succeed. Clearly, one may not rebid spades! Playing these conventions, both the 3♣ and 3♦ bids are alertable. This is also the case for the responses.

These conventions allow the partnership to stop short of game when the responder has a poor hand, and to find 4-4 fits in the majors. Whether you play 2/1, or Standard American, you may want to discuss this convention with your partners.

Bridge Notes Continued.

According to the Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge: Law 40.B. Concealed Partnership Understandings are prohibited

A player may not make a call or play based on a special partnership understanding unless an opposing pair may reasonably be expected to understand its meaning or unless his side discloses the use of such call or play in accordance with the regulations of the sponsoring organization.

♦ Bridge is not a game of secret messages; the auction belongs to everyone at the table.

♠ Remember that the opponents are entitled to know the agreed meaning of all calls.

♦ The bidding side has an obligation to disclose its agreements according to the procedures established by ACBL.

♠ *When asked, the bidding side must give a full explanation of the agreement. Stating the common or popular name of the convention is **not** sufficient.*

UNUSUAL CARDING AGREEMENTS

Except for leading low from a doubleton which requires a pre-Alert, carding agreements do not require an Alert of any kind. However, the box on the card in the middle of SPECIAL CARDING [] PLEASE ASK must be checked when playing a completely unexpected method or one that is not easily or clearly described by simply checking a box. EXAMPLES: Leading low from a doubleton (also requires pre-Alert) as does carding which changes during the hand which change/switch agreements.

DECLARER IS EXPECTED TO EXAMINE AN OPPONENT'S CONVENTION CARD WITHOUT PROMPTING IN ORDER TO ASCERTAIN THEIR DEFENSIVE METHODS

Problem Hand

Provided by Neil H. Timm.

How would you bid the following hand? It came up in a club game last month in the Villages. North is the dealer. The hand follows.

North	
♠ A10982	
♥ K10932	
♦ AQ8	
♣ Void	
West	East
♠ J7	♠ 3
♥ J8754	♥ AQJ6
♦ 107	♦ 4
♣ AK109	♣ J876543
South	
♠ KQ654	
♥ Void	
♦ KJ96532	
♣ Q	

North has 13 HCP and would clearly open 1♠. South has only 11 HCP; however, counting dummy points South has a void and a singleton or at least 7 (five card trump support with a void = 5 points + 2 for singleton) more dummy points or 18 Dummy points; clearly in the slam zone. Or if you count the diamond suit length (3 points) plus 1 more point for the fifth spade. The point count increases to 22; thus, 11 + 22 = 33 or slam values.

What is your bid as South? You have several options: (1) 2 diamonds as a game force, (2) Jacoby 2NT*, (3) the concealed splinter bid of 3♥*, (4) Swiss bids etc. Depending on the direction you take, the sequence of bids will differ. We look at several approaches.

Playing Concealed Splinters

North 1♠ 3♠* (where) 4♣ (scroll bid) 5♦ (queen ask) 7♠	South 3♥* (singleton or void somewhere) 4♥ (hearts) 5♣ (heart void with one keycard) 6♣ (yes and extra)
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Playing Jacoby 2NT

North 1♠ 3♣* (singleton/void) 4♣ (void & 1 Keycard) 6♦ (cue bid) 7♠	South 2NT* (spade raise) 4♣* (asking bid – singleton or void) 5♥ (cue bid) 6♣
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Playing EKCB

North	South
1♠	2♦ (GF)
2♥	2♠
5♦ (EKCB)	5♠ (one)
6♣ (queen ask)	6♠ (yes)
7♠	

Playing DRKCB with minor + major

North	South
1♠	2♦ (GF)
2♥	2♠
3♦	4♠
4NT (DRKCB)	5NT (two key cards with higher ranking Q)
6♠	7♥
7♠	

Cue bidding

North	South
1♠	2♦ (GF)
2♥	2♠
3♥	4♦ (cue bid)
5♣ (cue bid)	5♥ (cue bid)
6♦ (cue bid)	6♠
7♠	

No matter your approach, I hope you all reached the seven spade contract. If you did not get to seven, do not feel bad. Most pairs only bid a small slam, 6♠. Some say never bid seven in match point games!