

WINNING BRIDGE CONVENTIONS

# STRONG 2♣ CONVENTION AND 2♦ WAITING

Patty Tucker



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## **Strong Hands**

# Strong Hands

## Introduction

One of the most common difficulties new players face is in bidding strong hands. 17+ HCP hands occur less than 10% of the time, so new players don't have the opportunity to bid and practice them very often.

In these pages we will be considering not only the technical aspects of the bids but which bid should be chosen to achieve the best result.

## An Overview

Standard American bidding uses an opening bid of 2♣ to show one of three hands:

- A balanced hand with 22+ points;
- A suited hand with 21+ points; or
- A one-suited or two-suited hand with 8 ½ to 9 (or more) “playing tricks”.

Other hands opener might have are reasonably strong hands which are not strong enough to open 2♣, but which can be shown by a different opening bid or at opener's rebid:



- A balanced hand with 20-21 HCPs in which case opener will open 2NT; or
- A balanced hand with 18-19 HCPs in which case opener will *rebid* 2NT; or
- A five-card or longer suit and 19 HCPs, in which case opener will *rebid* 3NT; or
- A two-suited (or three suited hand) of 17+ HCPs in which opener's long suit is of lower rank in than his second suit in which case opener will make a "Reverse" at his first rebid; or
- A two-suited (or three suited hand) or 18+ HCPs in which opener's higher ranking suit is longer or equal in length to his second suit in which case opener will make a "Jump Shift" at his first rebid.

In every case opener must think carefully about how the auction might develop, before he makes his opening bid. When you open 2♣ you start your auction a full level higher. Sometimes you run into difficulty describing your hand to your partner or eliciting the information you need in order to make an informed decision as to where you might want to play the contract.

The balanced hands are very straightforward. With Stayman and Jacoby Transfers available you almost never have difficulty getting to the optimum contract

when you open 2NT or when you open 2♣ and rebid 2NT. Also the jump to 2NT showing the 18-19 point hand holds few traps.

Distributional hands are another matter. Two-suited hands are generally easier to describe if you can start at the one level. Three-suited hands are almost impossible to describe if you start the bidding with 2♣.

As we look at each of these strong bids in the following chapters keep these thoughts in mind and think not only of what the opening bid might be, but also what the rebid will be; how you think the auction will develop. These are the questions you should ask yourself:

- What do I need from responder in order to make game?
- Is it likely that an opponent will overcall or double if I open at the one level?
- Am I the first person to bid or is partner a passed hand?
- If I open 2♣ will I be able to easily describe my hand to partner?

## **Strong 2♣ Convention and 2♦ Waiting**

## Strong 2♣ Convention and 2♦ Waiting

The Strong 2♣ Convention is a conventional bid used to show a hand that is so strong (in either high card points or distribution) that Opener needs as little as five points or a trick from responder in order to make game. (A trick in this context is defined as an Ace, a King or a singleton or a void and a trump fit.)

An opening bid of 2♣ is generally described as one of three hands:

1. A balanced hand with 22+ points;
2. A hand containing one or more suits of at least five cards (a suited hand) with 21+ points; or
3. An unbalanced hand with a long suit that needs one trick or less to make game.

If opener needs more than one trick from responder to make game, he should not open 2♣. If responder has six points, he will always bid after a suit opening bid by partner. Therefore, if opener needs six points to make game, he has no need to open 2♣ but should open at the one level in a suit or 2NT with 20-21 HCPs and a balanced hand.

Opener might also have a long and strong suit that needs very little from partner in order to make game.

An example would be: ♠KQJ109542 ♥AJ ♦void ♣A53

What is opener's likely contract? *Opener's most likely contract is 4♠.*

How many tricks would he need to make that contract? *He would need 10 tricks.*

How many losers does opener have? *Opener has four losers: 1♠, 1♥ and 2♣'s.*

What does opener need in order to make game?  
*Opener can make game:*

- *if responder has as little as the ♣K (opener might make game if responder has as little as the ♣Q); or*
- *if responder has three spades and only one or two clubs; or*
- *if responder has the ♥K; or*
- *if responder has any Ace or a King, even if partner doesn't have a fit for spades; or*
- *if responder has as many as one or two spades and a singleton or void in clubs.*

This is a 2♣ opener.

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## Strong 2♣ Convention and 2♦ Waiting

Bridge students quickly discover that ‘basic’ bidding’ will only get them so far. If they really want to improve, it is necessary to master a certain number of bidding conventions, and be prepared both to play them and play against them. This ebooklet covers the Strong 2♣ Convention and 2♦ Waiting.



**PATTY TUCKER** (Dunwoody, Georgia) is an ABTA Master Bridge Teacher and cofounder of Whirlwind Bridge and Atlanta Junior Bridge. Her success at the bridge table culminated in her victory in the 2000 Baldwin Flight A North American Open Pairs with long-time bridge partner Kevin Collins. Patty and Kevin were married in 2006.