

# The Simplified Club System

## Introduction

Standard American bidding has a number of problems. For example, under Standard American, an opening bid of one of a major promises at least a five card suit. There is nothing wrong with this approach by itself. It facilitates finding major suit fits, and because of the way bridge scoring works, those are the most important fits to find. However, Standard American makes a one no trump bid artificial, indicating extra strength, and thus has no natural bid to indicate a balanced distribution with a normal opening hand. As a result, there are some hands with opening points but no suit to bid. To address this, Standard American has adopted the better minor rule, making bids of both one club and one diamond artificial, indicating either a biddable minor or a balanced distribution with as few as three cards in the suit bid. This can create rebidding problems and generally complicates the resulting bidding sequences.

A second problem is that an opening bid can have a wide range of points, from 13 to 21. Because a partnership can usually make game with 26 points between them, the responder feels compelled to bid with as few as 6 points for fear of missing a game. On the other hand, responder cannot make a jump bid (we are assuming a new suit, raises being complicated by whether one is using limit raises and/or Jacoby no trumps) unless he has a very strong hand. Thus, after a one heart – one spade – two diamond sequence, for example, the partnership knows very little about its strength, and could wind up at the three level with barely more than half the points in the deck.

Moreover, this is not the end of the conventions. New conventions are developed to address the problems with “natural” bidding and to fill holes in the system until the system becomes more conventional than natural: limit raises, new minor forcing, Jacoby no trumps, fourth suit forcing and Jacoby transfers, to name a few. A well known bridge columnist publishes a bidding quiz almost every Friday, each one with three or four bidding situations and a “what do you bid now” question. Think what it says about the complexity of Standard American that this columnist can think up nearly 200 bidding situations a year, year-in and year-out, where the right bid is not obvious. And he doesn’t even use many of the conventions adopted in the name of Standard American bidding.

The Simplified Club System tries to address the basic problems of Standard American by replacing three artificial bids – one club, one diamond, and one no trump – with one: a one club bid used to open all hands with 16 or more high card points or 17 or more points counting distribution. This allows the one no trump bid to be used naturally, indicating opening points and a balanced distribution. Using no trump for balanced hands means that opening bids of a suit indicate at least five cards in the suit in most cases. The one exception is hands with 4-4-4-1 distribution, the only unbalanced hand with no five card suit, and these are opened with the lowest ranking four card suit, always a minor.

As the name implies, the Simplified Club System does not try for highly sophisticated, complex bidding sequences which can describe any hand accurately. Rather, it is

intended for the player who is no longer a beginner but is finding it difficult to understand the nuances of those 200 hands the columnist comes up with every year. For that player, the Simplified Club System should be fairly easy to learn and should improve bidding accuracy significantly. The experienced tournament player already comfortable with the modern array of conventions is not as likely to find the Simplified Club System as useful.

In general, the bidding in the Simplified Club System is natural reflecting what is known about the partnership distribution and points. However, a number of useful conventions are used which the Standard American bidder will be familiar with. The conventions include:

Blackwood: This is the standard Blackwood convention in which a bid of four no trump after a suit has been settled on is a request for partner to show how many aces he has, bidding four clubs with all four or none of the aces, four diamonds with one ace, four hearts with two, and four spades with three. Roman Keycard Blackwood could also be used by partnership agreement.

Stayman: There are many versions of the Stayman Convention. The one used in the Simplified Club System is as follows: When a player bids two clubs over a one no trump bid by partner, the partner must rebid (a) two diamonds with no four card major, (b) two of his four card major with one four card major, or (c) two no trump with both four card majors. The no trump bidder has no discretion in replying to the two club bid.

Gerber: The form of the Gerber bidding is like Standard American, a bid of four clubs asking for aces. A response of four diamonds means none or four, four hearts means one, four spades means two, and four no trump means three. Under Standard American, Gerber can only be used when no trump has been selected as the “suit” for the partnership. The Simplified Club System expands the use of Gerber slightly. A bid of 4 clubs is Gerber whenever it could not be a natural bid. Examples of where a four clubs bid is Gerber are highlighted in the discussion of specific bidding sequences below. One fairly common example is a jump to four clubs over an opening bid of one of a major.

When we say that the bidding sequences are natural in light of what is known about point count and distribution, that means that a number of the rules used in Standard American, which one might think of as being natural, are not used. For example, a single raise of an opening one level bid in Standard American can be very weak, as few as 6 points. Thus, Standard American requires a game going hand to be jump bid (or to use a waiting bid in another suit if the partnership is using limit raises). With the Simplified Club System, you know the opening bidder has limited points and can pass with a much stronger hand without worrying about missing a game. Thus, a single raise is invitational, asking opener to indicate whether he has a minimum or a maximum, and there is no need for a jump bid convention. Indeed, jump raises of an opening bid are generally preemptive in nature and show weakness.

Before we start covering the details, let's spend a little time on the theory. The Simplified Club system is based on the assumption that it takes 20 combined partnership

points for declarer to make a one level contract, 22 combined points to make a two level contract, 24 points for a three level contract, 26 points for a four level contract, 28 points for a five level contract, 32 points for a small slam and 36 points for a grand slam. Experience indicates it is a pretty good assumption given the inaccuracies in the point count as a measure of the playing strength of the hand. Looking at just the combined partnership points also ignores the fact that, particularly for no trump hands, the playing strength declines as the strength between the hands becomes unbalanced. A 12 point hand opposite a 12 point hand is odds on to make three no trump, but a 24 point hand opposite a zero point hand is likely to struggle to make one no trump. This is because developing the maximum tricks in a suit frequently depends on being able to lead from the right hand, and as the point count becomes more unbalanced, the ability to lead from the weaker hand when you want to is reduced, particularly in no trump where you cannot use ruffing to get to the weaker hand.

When we talk about points, we mean high card points for a no trump bid and high card points plus distribution for a suit bid. High cards are counted the usual way: four for an ace, three for a king, two for a queen and one for a jack. Distribution points can be calculated in a number of different ways, all of which are essentially equivalent. The way we like is to add a point for each card in a suit above four when you are bidding your suits. When supporting partner's suit, count one for a doubleton, two for a singleton and three for a void with three card (or less) support. With four or more cards in support of partner's suit, count one for a doubleton, three for a singleton and five for a void. Thus, the following hand:

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

would have 13 points bidding no trump (presumably after partner bid hearts) 14 points when first bidding spades or diamonds, 15 points bidding clubs in support of partner's club bid, and 16 points bidding diamonds in support of partner's diamond bid.

A fundamental rule of the Simplified Club System is that a hand should make an opening bid whenever it has at least half the points needed to make game in the chosen suit or no trump. Without this rule, there is the possibility that a hand that could make game would be passed out by the partnership. Thus, a hand with balanced distribution, that is, a no trump hand, should be opened with 12 points, a major suited hand with 13 points, and a minor suited hand with 14 points.

A basic goal of the Simplified Club system is to have most opening bids define the opening bidder's strength within at most a four point range. Thus an opening no trump bid shows 12 to 15 points, and an opening major suit bid shows 13 to 16 points. We fudge the rule a bit for minor suited hands in order to simplify the bidding of strong hands and say the a minor suit opening bid shows 14 to 16 points, just a three point range. All stronger hands are opened with the one club bid, that is, no trump hands with 16 or more (high card) points and major or minor suited hands with 17 or more points (including distribution).

In general, responses to opening bids are constructed so that the partnership knows within two points whether it has strength for game and, in most cases, at least one of the partners knows whether it is a game going hand. For example, if a player opens one heart and the partner bids two clubs (a two over one bid) the response promises eleven points so the partnership must have at least 24 points, within two of game in a major. If either opener or responder has a couple of extra points, that player knows there are points for game.

After an opening suit bid and response, the bidding for the most part follows the standard rules: a bid of a new suit promises at least four cards and is a one round force (with a few exceptions); rebids of a suit promise at least one more card than previously shown; a bid of the cheapest no trump shows weakness, specifically no more than one point above the previously shown minimum. (After a no trump opening, as in Standard American, most bidding sequences have conventional meanings.) There are no artificial bids, no fourth suit forcing or special meanings for a reverse. Jump bids, which are also one round forcing, and unforced raises of partner's suit are the only bids that promise extra strength, at least two points above the previously shown minimum. If one of the partners knows there are enough points for game, it is that partner's job to keep the bidding open through a series of one round forcing bids until game is reached (or until the partner realizes there is such a misfit that game is unlikely).

Once a suit has been decided upon, that is, bid by one partner and raised, either directly or with an intervening bid, by the other partner, the partners use cue bids to further define their point count and show controls. The bid of any suit other than the agreed trump suit indicates both strength, at least two points above the minimum number of points the partner could have for the previous bidding, and control of the suit, either an ace or a void. When the partnership has already shown enough points for game, a further cue bid indicates slam interest. When a partner wants to show strength but does not have any controls that have not already been cue bid, he bids the cheapest no trump, a "suitless cue bid." It is clear that the no trump bid is not natural because it has already been decided that the hand should be played in a suit, not no trump. This suitless cue bid is a unique feature of the Simplified Club system.

Another aspect of the Simplified Club system that may seem strange to someone used to Standard American bidding is the emphasis placed on suit length rather than suit quality in deciding which bid to make. Indeed, the bidding sequences are controlled virtually entirely by distribution and not by the number of high cards within a suit. A five card major suit is considered adequate for an opening bid even if the highest card in the suit is a six. And in no trump bidding, we tend to consider whether the partnership has adequate length in each suit instead of focusing on whether there are stoppers.

That is basically all there is to the Simplified Club system, other than a few special rules for no trump bidding. The rest is just applying these principles to specific situations. The following sections describe the usual bidding sequences resulting from these principles following each type of opening bid: one of a major, one diamond, two clubs, one no trump, and one club. The descriptions are at a summary level. Limited examples of

hands are given, and it may be useful for the reader to think of examples and how the sequences would work with them. In the alternative, of course, the reader can download the Simple Club program and practice on an unlimited number of hands.

## **The One of a Major Sequences**

With 13 – 16 points and a five or more card major, one should open with one of the major. That is about as much of an absolute rule as you can have in a bidding system. You should open one of the major even if you have a seven card minor suit with five honors. You should open one of the major even if it has no honor cards at all. Any other opening bid would affirmatively deny having a five card major. As noted above, all the Simplified Club bidding sequences are driven by distribution, and hiding a five card major would throw off all of the sequences.

The responsive bidding to one of a major is very much like standard American except that responder knows opener has no more than 16 points. In standard American, a hand opening with a one level bid can have 21 points and responder feels compelled to bid with as few as 6 points for fear of missing a game. In the Simplified Club System, responder can be comfortable passing with less than ten points, and will usually pass with a mediocre ten.

If responder has three or more card support, the major is almost always the right trump suit, and responder should accept partner's suit, either raising it or passing. Consistent with the Simplified Club principle of controlling bidding by distribution and not suit quality, any three card support will do. If responder had a seven card spade suit with four honors in addition to three hearts, he should still raise opener's hearts instead of bidding spades even if his heart suit were headed by the four. In practice, the partnership would lose whatever heart losers they had regardless of what were trumps, and the spade suit would likely be runnable, providing lots of discards when hearts are trump. Thus, sticking with hearts as the trump suit would almost always be the right thing to do.

When responder realizes there is a major suit fit, the only real question is whether the partnership has enough points for game. If responder has eleven points or more, perhaps even a good ten<sup>\*</sup>, game is at least a possibility, and responder will raise opener to two of the major. In the Simplified Club System, this is a one round forcing bid. Opener will show a maximum (15-16 points) by making a cue bid, or bidding 2NT if no cue bid is available. With a minimum, he will simply raise the major suit to three. Responder will then have an accurate count of opener's points and can decide whether to go to game, pass, or cue bid as a slam try. Because all hands with support and game possibilities respond to a one of a major opening with a raise to two, raises to three or four of the major can be used as preemptive bids.

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\* A good ten points might be, for example, a hand with four card support and two or three tens. If you do not feel comfortable evaluating the playing strength of a hand beyond its bare point count, stick with having 11 or more points to raise.

If responder does not have at least three card support, the partnership has to locate a trump suit, and try to do so without getting to too high a level. Let's start with familiar territory for those who know Standard American bidding. If you have a five card suit of lower rank than opener's suit and 11 or more points, you bid two of your suit, just as in Standard American. The differences between a two-over-one bid in the Simplified Club system and in Standard American are, first, that the bid of a new suit promises five cards, not just four, and, second, that the two-over-one bid is unlimited in strength. If you have 25 points and a five card diamond suit, you would still bid just two diamonds over a one heart opening bid. You know you are heading to slam, probably grand slam, but the two-over-one bid is a one round force, so there is no need to rush things.

How can a two-over-one bid promise a five card suit? As we will see later, any hand without a five card suit can use a no trump bid. The most unbalanced hand without a five card suit has 4-4-4-1 distribution, and if there is no fit, the singleton must be in partner's five card major. That means the singleton suit is well covered, and a no trump bid is permissible. We call such hands, that is, hands that would qualify as no trump distribution except for shortness in partner's suit, "semi-balanced."

The two-over-one bid is invitational to game. With a maximum hand, opener knows there are points for game and should make a forcing bid. With a six card suit, opener can rebid it, jumping to the three level to show his strength. Responder decides whether to raise to game in opener's major, usually the best choice with a doubleton in support, bid three no trump, or bid one of his own suits. If opener has three card support of responder's suit, he knows the partnership has at least eight cards in the suit and can raise, again jumping to show strength. With a semi-balanced hand, opener can jump to three no trump. If none of these bids fit his hand, Opener can bid a new suit, which is, of course, forcing for one round, although ambiguous as to points, and promises at least a four card suit.

With a minimum, opener will make a non-forcing bid if possible, making a single raise where he would have jumped with a maximum and bidding two no trump where he would have bid three with a maximum. Responder will usually pass these bids unless he has extra strength, 13 points or more, and the intent to get to game. If none of those bids are available to opener, he will have a second biddable suit and will have to bid it, responder's two-over-one bid being unlimited and a one round force. The new suit bid will force responder to bid again, but he will be aware that opener may have a minimum and, if he also has a minimum (11 to 12 points) will make a non-forcing bid to allow opener to pass.

What happens if responder's five card suit is higher ranking than opener's, that is, opener bid one heart and responder has spades? Then a bid at the two level really crowds the bidding, so under the Simplified Club system, that bid requires 13 points and is virtually forcing to game. The usual bidding rules are used to locate a fit, but because the partners know they have enough points to reach at least the four level, jump bids are generally not necessary. The exception is obvious: where there is a minor suit fit, you need about 28 points for game; so if the partner first showing support has an extra point or two and

would like to ensure game is reached, he would jump directly to game. For example, the sequence one heart – two spades – three diamonds – four diamonds would indicate that responder has four card support of diamonds and a bare minimum 13 or 14 points. The four diamond bid is only invitational to game and Opener can pass with a minimum (13 point) hand. So if responder thinks game is makeable, say he has five card support and 14 points, he should go directly to five diamonds over opener’s three diamond bid.

If responder does not have a five card suit and does not have three card support of opener’s major, he must have a balanced or semi-balanced hand and should be bidding no trump. A bid of one no trump limits responder’s hand to 12 points and will be covered in more detail below. So if responder has no five card suit and 13 or more points, he should bid two no trump. The bid, like the two spade bid, is virtually forcing to game. If opener is balanced, he should bid three no trump. He can also rebid a six card suit or bid a new suit if does not think the hand will play in no trump. As with the two spade bid, jump bids are not necessary to show a game going hand.

Let’s look at some examples:

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ K Q 10 5 3 ♥ 9 3 ♦ K Q 7 ♣ K 10 4  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ J 8 6 ♥ A K 10 8 4 ♦ A 4 ♣ Q 9 8	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	South	1H	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Heart suit
	North	2S	Five card Spade suit, 13 or more points
	South	3S	At least three card support of spades, forcing to game
	North	4S	Minimum hand (13 to 14 points). With 15 or more points, would have cue bid to show slam interest.

What would happen if South’s six of spades was a diamond instead? Let’s see:

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ K Q 10 5 3 ♥ 9 3 ♦ K Q 7 ♣ K 10 4  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ J 8 ♥ A K 10 8 4 ♦ A 4 6 ♣ Q 9 8	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	South	1H	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Heart suit
	North	2S	Five card Spade suit, 13 or more points
	South	2NT	Balanced hand
	North	3NT	Minimum hand (13 high card points). With 17 or more points, would have explored slam.

Let’s consider another “misfit.”

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ K 3 ♥ K Q 10 3 ♦ K 7 ♣ Q J 10 4 3  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ A K 10 8 6 ♥ 8 6 ♦ A Q 10 4 ♣ 9 8	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	South	1S	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Spade suit
	North	2C	Five card Club suit, at least 11 points
	South	2D	5-4 in Spades and Diamonds (denies 4 card Heart suit)
	North	3NT	13 high card points opposite an opening hand is worth a game. Shows one or two Spades (would have bid a suit with a void), at most three Diamonds (would have raised with four). Promises length or a stopper in Hearts

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That covers the cases where responder has a reasonably good hand, 11 or more points, and is at least inviting game. What about weak hands? If responder has 0-7 points, he should pass. The partnership may already be at too high a level, and if the opponents do not take you out with their own bid, they have probably missed an opportunity for at least a part score. If responder has 8 – 10 points, the partnership can likely afford to get to the two level. Nevertheless, responder should pass with a doubleton or better. The partnership will have more than half the trumps, and finding a better fit below the three level is unlikely.

With a singleton or void in opener’s suit and 8 – 10 points, responder should bid, but should do so at the one level, either one spade over one heart with a five plus card spade suit or one no trump. These one-over-one bids warn partner that responder may have a poor hand with no fit that could well be overbid at the two level. Thus, with a minimum, opener would pass a one spade bid with two card or better support and pass a one no trump bid with even a marginally balanced hand. If neither of those options are attractive, opener could rebid his 6+ card major or bid a new five card suit at the two level. Responder will pass or retreat to a previously bid suit at the two level.

Note that we have just described one of the exceptions to the rule that a new suit bid is forcing. It has the characteristics of all of the exceptions to that rule: first that the responding bidder knows there is insufficient strength for game; second, that the new suit is a satisfactory trump suit; and third, that bidding up a level risks getting to an unmakeable contract. Thus, if the bidding has gone one heart – one spade – two diamonds and responder has eight to ten points and three diamonds, he should pass. The partnership has at most 26 points and very likely less, so game is highly unlikely. The partnership has at least seven diamonds, so that is a passable trump suit. And the partnership could have as few as 21 points, in which case even bidding at the two level is risky.

The one-over-one bid is also used for 11-12 point hands with no five card lower ranking suit to bid. As a result, when opener has a maximum (15 to 16 point) hand, he will

generally want to keep the bidding open because, as far as he knows, game is still a possibility. Thus, with a maximum, opener would raise a one spade response to two with three card or better support, raise a one no trump bid to two with balanced distribution, bid a new five card suit at the two level or rebid a six card major. If responder had made the one-over-one bid with the minimum 8 to 10 points, he will either pass these bids or retreat to a previously bid suit. However, if responder made the one-over-one bid with 11 to 12 points, he will bid on, re-raising a raise to game (i.e. 2 spades to four, 2 no trump to three) and, if opener did not raise, bidding something other than a retreat to a previously bid suit, since that would signal an 8 – 10 point hand and most likely be passed even with a maximum. Any other bid shows at least 11 points, and opener should be driving to game with 15-16 points.

Some examples:

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ K Q 10 5 3 ♥ 9 3 ♦ K 8 7 ♣ K 10 4  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ 8 6 ♥ A K 10 8 6 4 ♦ A 4 ♣ Q 9 8	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	South	1H	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Heart suit
	North	1S	Five card Spade suit, 8 to 12 points
	South	2H	6+ Hearts – non-forcing bid, suggests, but does not promise, weakness
	North	3H	Two card support of Hearts, 11 to 12 points. (with fewer points, would have passed – a raise after a non-forcing bid shows strength in the upper end of the previously shown range.) Invites game.
	South	4H	15 points (counting distribution) is in the maximum range. Accepts game invitation.

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ K Q 10 5 3 ♥ 9 3 ♦ K 7 ♣ Q 10 4 3  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ 8 6 ♥ A K 10 8 6 ♦ A Q 10 4 ♣ 9 8	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	South	1H	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Heart suit
	North	1S	Five card Spade suit, 8 to 12 points
	South	2D	5-4 in Hearts and Diamonds
	North	2NT	NT not previously bid, so 2NT shows 11-12 points, at most two Hearts, three Diamonds. Suggests length in Clubs.
	South	Pass	13 points (not counting distribution in no trump) is a minimum hand.

With 16 or more points, responder should be thinking about slam. The bidding starts out the same as with 13 points, but the responder keeps making forcing bids until he decides on slam or not.

Some examples:

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ A K Q ♥ 9 3 ♦ K Q 8 7 5 ♣ Q 10 4  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ 8 6 ♥ A K 10 8 6 ♦ A 10 4 ♣ K J 8	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	South	1 H	5+ card heart suit, 13 – 16 points
	North	2 D	5+ card diamond suit, at most 2 hearts, 11+ points
	South	3 D	3+ card support, still 13-16 points
	North	3 S	First round control of spades, 13+ points
	South	4 H	Ace of hearts, 15-16 points, denying control of clubs
	North	6 D	16-19 points (with 20+ points, would have tried for grand slam) taking a bit of a chance on the club suit.

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ A 10 6 5 3 ♥ 9 ♦ K 7 3 ♣ K Q 10 4  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ 8 ♥ A K 10 6 5 ♦ A 10 ♣ A J 9 8 3	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	1S	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Spade suit
	South	2H	Five card heart suit, at most two spades, 11+ points
	North	2NT	5 spades, at most 2 hearts, 13-14 points, no other 5 card suit
	South	3C	4+ card club suit, one round force
	North	5C	4 card club support, 15+ points in support of clubs. (4C bid as a forced response would show a minimum hand, 13-14 points)
	South	5D	Ace of diamonds, forcing small slam (3 aces & at least 34 combined points) and showing interest in grand slam
	North	5S	Ace of spades, interest in grand slam (because points were previously limited, cue bid does not promise extra points, but suggests nice features, in this case, an outside singleton and very good club support. Note: denies control of Hearts.)
	South	7C	Accepts the suggestion – partner’s ace of spades and at most doubleton heart suggest excellent playing strength.

Note that this is virtually a lay down grand slam: take the side suit winners and cross ruff hearts and spades (first spade ruff with the three, all other ruffs high) until you are left with high clubs in the South hand. You do not even need the king of hearts unless your opponents are clever enough to lead a trump.

## **Bidding Minor Suited Hands**

In the Simplified Club System, you either have a major suited hand, which we have defined as any hand with five or more cards in a major suit, or you have balanced distribution, defined as 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, or 5-3-3-2 distribution without a five card major, and if you don't have either of those, you have a minor suited hand. Minor suited hands are usually two suiters with 5-4-x-x distribution or better. (You are allowed to treat a hand with 5-3-3-2 distribution where a majority of the high card points are concentrated in the five card minor as a minor suited hand, particularly where the five card suit is diamonds, but that is the exception that proves the rule.) However, minor suited hands also include any hand with 4-4-4-1 distribution regardless of the quality of the suits. You cannot open a major suit without five cards, and you cannot open a no trump with a singleton, so you are stuck with treating 4-4-4-1 distribution as a minor suited hand.

Minor suited hands are opened with a bid in the better minor, either one diamond or two clubs. When deciding which is the better suit, the emphasis is almost exclusively on length. And because a two club bid crowds the auction much more than a one diamond bid, there is a preference for bidding diamonds. Therefore, with very few exceptions, the rule for minor suited hands is: bid your longer minor, and when the lengths are equal, bid diamonds.

Because of the difficulties of starting an auction with a two club bid, the bidding sequences after a two club opening differ in a number of ways from the bidding sequences after a one diamond opening. The two sequences will be described separately below.

### **The One Diamond Sequences**

The bidding sequences beginning with one diamond are essentially the same as the one of a major sequences with two big differences. The first arises from the strong preference for a major suit contract. As described above, when the opening bid is a major suit and responder has support, even a very weak three cards, there is an extremely strong preference, a virtual requirement, for responder to support partner rather than bidding his own suit, even if it is a strong major. The bias is reversed when the opening is one diamond. With support for diamonds and a five card major, responder should usually delay showing the diamond support and bid the major first. That bid promises at least a five card suit and is made at the one level with eight to twelve points and at the two level with thirteen or more points. Obviously, if opener has a minimum hand, he will, over a one level response, try to shut down the bidding as quickly as possible, passing with even two card support and, if not, bidding a second suit at the one level, bidding one no trump or rebidding diamonds with a six card suit. Any other bid shows a maximum and invites game if responder has 11 or 12 points. If responder bids his major at the two level, that is virtually forcing to game, and the usual bidding guidelines are followed to find the best fit.

The second difference also arises from the preference for a major suit contract combined with the possibility that a player opening one diamond has a 4-4-4-1 distribution. If responder has three card or better support of partner's diamonds and no five card major, he should raise with 11 or more points, making the working assumption that opener has a five card diamond suit – that will be the case 85% of the time. However, unlike the case of a raise of a major suit, this does not finally decide the trump suit. If opener has a four card major, he will bid it at the two level in an attempt to find a major suit fit. Thus, after a raise of one diamond to two, the bid of a major suit by opener is not a cue bid. Responder will support opener's major suit with four card support, raising to three with a minimum 11 to 12 points and raising to game with 13 or more.

If responder cannot support the major, he should be mindful that opener may well have 4-4-4-1 distribution and he should return to diamonds only with four or more cards in that suit (making a jump bid with 13 or more points to force game). With neither support for the major nor four card support of diamonds, responder will bid his own suit, with opener, in order of preference, (a) raising responder's suit if it is a major and opener has four card support, (b) rebidding diamonds at the three level with a five card suit, (c) bidding no trump if semi-balanced, two no trump with a minimum and three with a maximum, (d) rebidding diamonds with a five card suit when the cheapest bid is at the four level, or (e) raising responder's suit if it is clubs and opener has four card support. That last sentence has an awful lot of information in it, and you should spend some time thinking through the implications. It all follows naturally from the preference for a major suit contract over a no trump contract and a no trump contract over a minor suit contract.

With a legitimate 5+ card diamond suit and no four card major, opener would, after a one diamond-two diamond sequence, raise to three diamonds with a minimum or would bid two no trump, the "suitless cue bid," to show strength. Subsequent bidding follows the same principles as with the major suit sequences, recognizing the need for an extra point or two to bid game at the five level.

Finally, because of the probability that the hand will be played in a minor suit and the extra high card points needed for a minor suit game, opener should generally have 14 points to open one diamond. Of course, if opener has, for example, two four card majors, he may decide that the hand is not likely to play in a minor and no extra points are needed. This is one of those areas of judgment.

Let's see how this works in practice:

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ K Q 10 5 3 ♥ 9 3 ♦ K 8 7 ♣ K 10 4  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ 8 6 4 ♥ A ♦ A K 10 6 4 ♣ Q 9 8 5	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	South	1D	14 – 16 points, 5+ card Diamond suit or 4-4-4-1
	North	1S	Five card Spade suit, 8 to 12 points
	South	2S	3+ card support, at least 15 points (unforced raise)
	North	4S	11 to 12 points. Accept game invitation

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ K 3 ♥ Q 9 3 ♦ K 7 6 ♣ A Q 10 4 3  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ Q 10 8 6 ♥ A K 9 8 ♦ A J 10 4 ♣ 9	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	South	1D	14 – 16 points, 5+ card Diamond suit or 4-4-4-1
	North	2D	Three plus card Diamond support, 11+ points, no 5 card major
	South	2H	Four cards in Hearts
	North	3C	Five card club suit. Forcing bid at the 3 level strongly suggests extra points. (Would have bid 2 NT without the Queen of Clubs.)
South	3NT	Semi-balanced with clubs covered	

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ A Q 9 ♥ Q 9 3 ♦ Q J 7 5 ♣ Q 10 4  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ K 10 6 ♥ K J 8 6 ♦ A K 8 6 5 ♣ 7	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	South	1 D	14 – 16 points, 5+ card Diamond suit or 4-4-4-1
	North	2 D	Three plus card Diamond support, 11+ points, no 5 card major
	South	2 H	Four cards in Hearts
	North	4 D	Four card support of Diamonds, invites game with a max.
South	5D	15-16 points (nothing to cue bid)	

### The Two Club Sequences

The two club sequences are driven by the strong preference for major suit and no trump contracts complicated by the fact that the bidding starts at the two level. Because of that, if you have 5-3-3-2 distribution with a five card club suit, you will most often open one no trump rather than two clubs. A two club opening bid virtually promises 5-4-x-x or

more unbalanced distribution or 4-4-4-1 distribution with a singleton diamond. Because the bidding starts at the two level and there is a substantial chance of winding up in a minor suit contract, opener should have 14 to 16 points.

If responder has fewer than nine points, he should pass, even with little or no club support. The partnership may already be at too high a level, and the chances of getting too high before finding a fit are just too great to risk it. If responder does not have club support, he should hope the opponents bid or, if they don't, that they got shut out of a good contract.

If responder has nine or more points and a five plus card major, he should bid two of the major even with club support, exploring the possibility of a major suit fit. If opener has three card or better support, he should raise responder's major. Responder will pass with a minimum hand and raise to game with eleven or more points. If responder bid hearts and opener cannot support hearts but has a four card spade suit, he bids two spades, again searching for a major suit fit. Responder knows that the spade suit is only four cards because opener did not bid spades first. (Remember that opener would have bid a five card spade suit first even if he also had a seven card club suit.) If responder only has nine or ten points, he has to make a weak bid, either passing opener's spade bid with at least three card support, bidding three clubs with at least two card support or bidding two no trump. Opener should pass any of these bids. With eleven or more points, responder will bid three spades with four plus card support, forcing to game (opener will cue bid if appropriate or bid game in spades without any features to show) or will bid three no trump with a semi-balanced hand. If responder cannot do either of those bids, he either can support clubs (and should do so above the three level if he doesn't want to be passed out) or he has six or more hearts and can rebid them or he has a freakish two suiter in diamonds and hearts, in which case he can bid diamonds at the three level.

If opener cannot support responder's major or bid two spades but has a semi-balanced hand, he should bid two no trump. If opener is not semi-balanced, he either has a six plus card club suit, in which case he should bid three clubs, or has a four card suit lower ranking than responder's suit, in which case he should bid that suit at the three level. At that point, responder will often be in a position to pick the final contract. With a six card major, responder can re-bid it at the three level, and opener will bid three no trump with a singleton or four of the major with a doubleton.

What if responder has nine or more points and no five card major but a five card diamond suit? If responder has only nine or ten points and at least two card club support, he probably should pass, but with eleven or more points or with fewer than two clubs, he should bid two diamonds. The subsequent bidding is just as it is for a bid of two of a major by responder except that opener will always be able to show any second suit he may have at the two level. Note that if opener has 4-4-4-1 distribution (which would be with a singleton diamond) and responder has a diamond suit, either the hand will play reasonably well in no trump or responder has a two suiter and a fit in his second suit can be found.

If responder is semi-balanced with 11 plus points and no five card suit, he should bid two no trump. Opener will rebid clubs with a six plus card suit or will bid a four card suit at the three level. If neither of those bids is available, or if opener thinks his long club suit can be run or doesn't like his four card suit, he should bid three no trump. At that point, responder will usually be in a position to pick the final contract.

If responder does not have a five card suit in diamonds or a major and is not semi-balanced, he must have at least four card support for opener's club suit. If responder has fewer than twelve points, he can pass or make a preemptive bid in clubs over the three level. With twelve or more points, game in clubs should be reasonable, and responder should raise opener's two clubs bid to three. That bid is forcing. Opener will bid a four card major, if he has one, looking for a possible four-four major suit fit, responder raising to game with four card support. Without a four card major, opener will bid four clubs with a minimum 14 points, inviting partner to bid game with 13 or more points. (Game with 27 combined points and a nine card fit is a good bet.) He will bid game directly with 15 to 16 points.

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ 5 3 ♥ Q 10 9 5 3 ♦ K 10 8 7 ♣ K 7  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ K Q 10 8 ♥ 8 ♦ A Q 4 ♣ Q 10 9 8 5	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	South	2C	14 – 16 points, 5+ card Club suit, unbalanced hand
	North	2H	Five card Heart suit, 9(+) points
	South	2S	Four card Spade suit
	North	2NT	Minimum hand, fewer than three spades (with three, would have passed) fewer than three clubs (with three, would have bid 3C)
	South	Pass	With a minimum hand (13 HCP) and an anemic club suit, there is no point in continuing

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ K 10 8 7 ♥ A K 10 3 ♦ 7 ♣ Q J 7 3  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ A 8 6 ♥ 8 7 ♦ A Q 10 9 6 ♣ K 9 8	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	North	2C	Five card Club suit or 4-4-4-1, 14+ points
	South	2D	5+ card Diamond suit
	North	2H	Showing four card Heart suit.
	South	3NT	11+ points (with less, would have bid 2NT) no four card spade suit, but promises a spade stopper.
	North	Pass	Semi-balanced after South's Diamond bid. (With unbalanced hand short in Spades, would rebid Clubs or show delayed Diamond support.)

South could have responded 2NT to North's 2C bid, and presumably did not because of concern about the worthless heart doubleton. If he had chosen the no trump response, the bidding would have gone:

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ K 10 8 7 ♥ A K 10 3 ♦ 7 ♣ Q J 7 3  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ A 8 6 ♥ 8 7 ♦ A Q 10 9 6 ♣ K 9 8	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	North	2C	Five card Club suit or 4-4-4-1, 14+ points
	South	2NT	11+ points, semi-balanced
	North	2H	Showing four card Heart suit.
	South	3NT	No Heart fit, no Spade suit
	North	Pass	Trust partner to know he is responsible for having Diamonds well stopped in case North has 4-4-4-1 distribution.

Which sequence is better? The two no trump response has the advantage of letting partner know right away that there is at least close to game going strength whereas the two diamond bid could be made with a very weak hand and has some danger of being passed out. Nevertheless, we prefer the two diamond response because the resulting sequence gives the partners significantly more information on which to select the final contract.

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ 10 3 ♥ A K 10 3 ♦ 9 7 ♣ A Q J 7 3  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ A Q 9 8 6 ♥ 8 ♦ A 9 6 ♣ 10 9 8 5	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	North	2C	Five card Club suit or 4-4-4-1, 14+ points
	South	2S	9+ points, five card Spade suit
	North	3H	Showing four card Heart suit.
	South	4C	No Heart fit, 11 to 12 points, invitational
	North	5C	Maximum points (15 to 16), accept invitation

South could have bid three no trump instead of four clubs, and if he had, that is probably where the bidding would have ended. A diamond lead, quite probable on the bidding, would have made a three no trump contract difficult. Thus, we think the four club bid, with a probable five-four fit, is the better choice.

### The One No Trump Sequences

As noted above, a hand with balanced, or no trump, distribution with about half the points needed for a no trump game is opened one no trump in the Simplified Club System. A

balanced hand with 12 points opposite another balanced hand with 12 points will most likely be able to make three no trump. Thus, a balanced hand with 12 points should be opened so as not to risk passing out a hand that could make game. Hands with 16 or more high card points are opened one club, and the one no trump bid is used for balanced hands with up to 15 high card points (remember, distribution points, if any, should not be counted when bidding no trump.)

A balanced distribution is defined in the Simplified Club System as one of three “shapes”: 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, and 5-3-3-2 where the five card suit is a relatively unattractive minor, either a club suit or a fairly weak diamond suit.\* When you open one no trump, you must have balanced distribution. You are absolutely promising your partner that you have at most one doubleton (and no singletons or voids) and also that you do not have a five card major or an attractive five card minor. You are **not** promising a stopper in every suit.

Because balanced distributions are so common (the probability of being dealt a hand with no trump distribution is about 35%) one no trump is the most common natural opening bid in the Simplified Club System.† It is also the opening bid which, other than the big club bid itself, is the most different from Standard American. As a result, a fairly detailed look at the bidding sequences starting with one no trump is called for, even though, compared with Standard American Yellow Card, the bidding is quite natural.

The sequences following a one no trump opening depend first on the responding bidder’s distribution and second on the responder’s point count.

### **Balanced Distribution.**

When the responder also has balanced distribution, he should bid as follows (as with the opening bid, distribution points are not counted):

With 0-11 points, the responder should pass.

With 11-12 points, the responder should bid two no trump. Opener will pass with 12-13 points. With 14-15 points, the partnership has enough points for game, and the only issue to resolve is whether it should be in no trump or a suit. With no four card major or five card minor, it is very unlikely that there will be an attractive trump suit, and opener will bid three no trump as a shutout. Otherwise, opener will look for an eight card suit fit as follows: If opener has one or more four card majors, he will bid his (lowest) four card major at the three level. Responder will raise to game with four card support and otherwise bid three no trump. If opener bid three hearts and responder does not have four

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\* Many players would say that a hand with 5-3-3-2 distribution and a relatively weak five card major should be opened one no trump. Because of the emphasis on distribution in the Simplified Club System, we would discourage that practice.

† Actually, the most common opening bid is the artificial one club. The distribution of opening bids, not counting preempts, is: one club, 28.2%; one no trump, 25.2%; one of a major, 23.8%; one diamond, 12.3%; and two clubs, 10.5%.

card support but does have a four card spade suit, responder will bid three spades, and opener will raise to game with four card support or bid three no trump without it. If opener has a five card minor, he bids it at the three level. Responder decides whether to bid three no trump or game in the minor. In making that decision, responder should keep in mind that opener's minor suit is may be relatively weak and that making five of a minor takes more points than making three no trump. Thus, responder should generally bid the minor suit game only if he has an outside doubleton (which, together with opener's doubleton, adds a couple of points to the partnership point count) particularly a worthless doubleton, and four card or good three card support, say A-x-x, or Q-J-10. These bidding sequences have been described in detail here, but the fact is that they are all quite natural.

With 13-16 points, the responder will bid three no trump directly unless he has a four card major suit. If so, responder will use the Stayman Convention to see if there is a 4-4 major suit fit. With a 4-4 fit, responder will bid game in the major. Otherwise, responder will bid three no trump.

With 17 or more points, the responder bids four clubs as Gerber, asking for aces, either directly or after using Stayman to find a major suit fit. After opener's response to the four club bid, a bid of four no trump is a sign-off. A bid of five no trump after asking for aces is invitational to slam. Opener will bid six with 14-15 points and will otherwise pass. Typically, responder will use the sign off when two aces are missing and will use the invitation with 17-18 or a poor 19 points. With a good 19 points or better, responder should bid six no trump on his own. After asking for kings, five no trump is a sign-off. Thus, responder has a choice of asking for kings or making an invitational bid but not both, and will have to decide whether knowing about point count or knowing about kings is more important in the slam decision. If Stayman reveals a 4-4 major suit fit, responder goes right to Gerber. After asking for aces, a bid of five of a major is also invitational, and opener will pass with 12-13 points.

### **Unbalanced Distributions**

With an unbalanced distribution, the chances are good that you will wind up in a suit contract. Because you will need a little bit more in the way of points to make game, you can afford to pass with up to ten points. Indeed, if your long suit is a minor, you can pass with up to 12 points. What about those rare cases when your partner opens one no trump and you don't have the points but you know the hand will play better in your suit. This is typically where you have a 6 plus card suit that has little or no chance of running in no trump either because it is missing many of the honors or because your hand has no side entries. In that case, you bid your suit at the two level, or the three level if it is clubs (so that it will not sound like Stayman). This is a rescue bid, telling partner that the hand is likely to be a disaster in no trump, and is a shutout. Opener will always pass.

The following descriptions are written in the order in which you classify your hand. In other words, if your hand falls into two categories, you would bid it as the first category

described here. For example, if you had a four card major and a five card minor, you would look at the directions for bidding with a four card major.

### Five Card Major

With a five card major and 13-16 points, you know you have the points for game. Your only question is whether opener has at least three card support of your suit. To find that out, you bid three of your major. Opener will bid three no trump with two card support and game in your major with three or more card support. Responder will always pass this bid unless he has a true two suiter (5-5-x-x or 6-5-x-x where the 6 card suit is a minor) in which case Responder will bid game in his second suit over a three no trump bid, as described below. If you have 5-4-x-x distribution, you should pass. You might miss a four-four fit. You might even miss a four-four fit that would play better than three no trump, but bridge is a game of probabilities, and the probabilities are that three no trump is where the hand will play the best.

With 17 or more points, you use the sequences above to find whether the suit will play better in your suit or no trump, and then you use Gerber, cue bids or Blackwood to explore slam possibilities. Note that there is no natural use of the four club bid in these sequences (responder would have bid five clubs with a club suit) so four clubs will always be Gerber. In addition to these conventions, where opener has bid four of the major, a bid of five is a slam invitation which opener will accept with a maximum.

What if you have 11-12 points? Now you need to not only whether opener has three plus card support for your major but also whether opener has a maximum opening that can support a game bid with your marginal hand. As mentioned above, a bid of two of your major would be a shutout and a bid of three promises enough points for game opposite a minimum opening. What can you do? The simple answer is to ignore the problem, passing with 11 points and bidding three of the major with twelve. You may occasionally wind up in a four of a major game with only 24 points between you, but that won't happen often. The alternative is to use the Stayman Invitational convention, described below in the optional conventions section. Of all the optional conventions, Stayman Invitational is the most useful and should be adopted first.

In the rare case where you have a true two suiter, that is, two five card suits or 6-5-x-x distribution with the five card suit a major and the six card suit a minor, you can bid game in your other five card suit over opener's three no trump bid. The three no trump bid showed a doubleton in your first suit, and because a no trump bidder has at most one doubleton, you know that opener has at least three card support of your second suit. That is the only situation (other than exploring slam) where you would bid over partner's three no trump bid. If you are using the Stayman Invitational convention for marginal hands and have been able to bid your major at the two level, you may bid your other five card suit at the three level over opener's two no trump bid, again knowing that opener has three card support. Opener will always pass this bid unless he has a maximum and your second suit is also a major. You would not have enough points for a minor suit game.

## Four Card Major

With one or both four card majors and 13-16 points, responder will use Stayman to see if there is a four-four fit in the majors. If so, responder should bid game in the major directly. (A raise to three would show a five card suit and be invitational if you are using Stayman Invitational for marginal hands.) If there is no major suit fit, responder's distribution, being unbalanced (a balanced distribution hand with a four card major was covered above) must either have a five plus card minor or a 4-4-4-1 shape. If there is a five card minor, use the bidding for a five card minor described below. If there is a six plus card minor, follow the rules for bidding a six card suit. If responder has 4-4-4-1 distribution, it is almost always best to be in three no trump. True, there may be a four-four fit in a minor, but by Murphy's law, if you try to find it, it will turn out that opener has a five card suit opposite your singleton and there is no playable trump suit. So with 4-4-4-1 distribution, bid three no trump.

With one or both four card majors and 17 or more points, responder will still use Stayman to see if there is a four-four fit in the majors. If there is, responder will have to jump to four clubs (Gerber) or four no trump (Blackwood). Any other bid would either be a shutout or invitational and would risk missing a possible slam. If there is no four-four fit in the majors, you bid the hand according to your second suit or, if you are 4-4-4-1, as if you had balanced distribution.

## Five Card Minor

With a five card minor and 13-16 points, responder will bid a Stayman two clubs and then bid three of his minor over whatever opener bids. Opener will respond three no trump with two card support. With three plus card support, opener will bid four of the minor with 12-13 points and five of the minor with 14-15 points. As with the five card major sequences, responder will almost always pass a three no trump bid. However, if responder is 5-5 in the minors, he should usually bid game in the other minor. Note that, if you have 5-5 in the minors, any game you are headed for would be in a minor suit, which needs a point or two more than a no trump or major suit game. Thus you would generally start the Stayman sequence with 14 or more points instead of 13 or more. With 13 points or less, you should bid a two diamonds or three clubs shutout. This is the only time that bidding a suit shutout over one no trump is appropriate without a six card suit. 5-5 in the minors is a difficult distribution to bid, but luckily, it only occurs in about 0.7% of the hands.

After the five card minor sequences ending in three no trump, the responder knows a great deal about opener's distribution. For example, assume responder's suit is diamonds, that is, he bid three diamonds before opener made the three no trump bid. We can construct the following table:

Opener's Response to Stayman	Opener's Distribution			
	Spades	Hearts	Diamonds	Clubs
Two Diamonds	3	3	2	5
Two Hearts	3	4	2	4
Two Spades	4	3	2	4
Two No Trump	4	4	2	3

This knowledge allows responder to make bids that might otherwise seem surprising. For example, where opener's Stayman response was diamonds and responder has a couple of extra points and a good three card club suit, say with two honors, responder can bid five clubs, knowing that opener has a five card club suit, albeit perhaps a weak one. This would give the following auction in which a player is making the first natural bid of a suit at the five level, and doing so with only three cards in the suit: 1NT – 2 clubs – 2 diamonds – 3 diamonds – 3NT – 5 clubs.

With 17 or more points, responder should be thinking about slam possibilities. He should start out with the same sequences to locate a fit. Over a three no trump bid by opener, responder can use Gerber to help with the decision. Where opener has supported responder's minor, Gerber will be unavailable and, as in Standard American, Blackwood will be of little use. However, responder will have quite specific information about opener's point count and a good idea of opener's distribution and should be able to decide fairly accurately whether slam is in the cards.

#### Six Plus Card Suit

With a suit of six or more cards, you know that you have at least an eight card fit with your partner, and you can be quite sure that you should be playing in a suit. (Those who are familiar with the gambling three no trump bid would say that is an exception to the rule.) Therefore, if you have the points, 13 if your six card suit is a major and 14 if it is a minor, you should bid game in your suit directly. Note that, in the rare case of a 6-5-x-x two suiter where the five card suit is a major and the six card suit is a minor, you would, following the hierarchy rule, treat the hand initially as a five card major to explore whether you had a 5-3 fit or better in the major (and, if you are playing Stayman Invitational for hands with 11-12 points, whether opener had a maximum or a minimum). You would also generally want to treat a hand with a six card major and 11-12 points as if it had a five card major. As noted above, if you are using Stayman Invitational, you would then show that your suit had six cards by bidding it over opener's no trump bid.

If you have enough points for slam, 19 or more, you can go directly to Gerber to find out about aces. With a marginal hand, 17 or 18 points, you may also want to use some of the bidding techniques above to find out the quality of your fit. In other words, you pretend your six card suit is a five card suit to find out if opener has three or four card support. You would be much more willing to go to slam with 17 points and three or four card support of your six card suit than with only two card support. Note that if opener has raised your three of a major bid to four, you can bid four no trump as Blackwood, raise to five as a slam invitation, or cue bid, also showing slam interest

Let us look at how this bidding would work with a few hands.

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ A Q 10 9 ♥ 8 7 3 ♦ K J 7 3 ♣ K 6  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ K 8 6 5 ♥ A K 9 4 ♦ 10 4 ♣ A 7 4	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	North	1 N	12 – 15 points, balanced
	South	2 C	Stayman, asking for majors. 13+ points
	North	2 S	Four card spade suit, denies four hearts
	South	4 S	Eight card fit, points for game. Not enough to consider slam
	North	Pass	

This is a fairly difficult hand to bid under Standard American. The bidding would start one diamond – one heart – one spade, but then what does South bid? Any spade raise would risk being passed, and a four spade bid would risk missing a slam if North had a maximum. Anyone for the fourth suit forcing convention?

Let's try another:

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ K 10 7 5 ♥ K 6 ♦ Q 10 6 ♣ A 8 7 4  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ 9 ♥ A Q 10 8 7 3 ♦ A K J 7 ♣ K 5	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	North	1 NT	12 – 15 points, balanced
	South	4 C	Gerber, asking for aces. Implies 19 or more points. Responder knows there is at least an eight card fit in Hearts
	North	4 D	One ace
	South	6 H	Eight card fit, points for slam. Three suits have first round control.
	North	Pass	

See how making the one no trump bid available for balanced hands with opening points simplifies things?

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ K Q 10 ♥ K Q 7 3 ♦ 9 3 ♣ K J 10 6  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ 8 6 ♥ A 4 ♦ A K 10 7 4 ♣ Q 9 8 2	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	North	1 NT	12 – 15 points, balanced
	South	2 C	Stayman, asking for majors. 13+ points (or 11-12 and five card major if playing Stayman invitational)
	North	2 H	Four card Heart suit, denies four Spades
	South	3 D	Five card suit, asking for three card support
	North	3 NT	Only doubleton support
	South	Pass	Points for game but not enough for slam.

South knows that North has seven cards in the majors and exactly two diamonds and therefore must have four clubs. Thus, five clubs is a possible bid. However, making five clubs would require North to have an early stopper in spades and some club honors. With that holding, three no trump is a better bet, and in the Simplified Club system (as in Standard American) there is a strong preference for bidding three no trump instead of game in a minor. Nevertheless, this is a case where there could be discussion under the Simplified Club system about which is the better bid.

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ K Q 10 ♥ 9 3 ♦ K Q 7 3 ♣ K J 10 6  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ 8 6 ♥ A K 10 7 4 ♦ A 4 ♣ Q 9 8 7	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	North	1 NT	12 – 15 points, balanced
	South	3 H	Five card Heart suit, 13+ points
	North	3 NT	Only doubleton support
	South	Pass	Knows North has at least 3 Spades and 3 Diamonds so is comfortable with 3NT

This is the same hand as the last one with hearts and diamonds switched. This time, South does not know about North's four clubs and is not tempted to bid five clubs. Make one of the spades a fifth club, however, and South will run to five clubs over three no trump.

### The One Club Sequences

In the Simplified Club System, all balanced hands with 16 or more high card points\* and unbalanced hands with 17 or more points (counting distribution) are opened one club.

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\* If you ever get a hand with balanced distribution and 25 or more points, forget one club and bid two no trump directly. If you play bridge three or four hours a week, you should get a hand like that about once every ten years. The two no trump opening is forcing to game. With 0-5 points, responder will bid game directly. With 5-8, responder will bid a five card major at the three level or three clubs as Stayman. These

Responder bids one diamond with fewer than seven points. The one diamond bid is artificial and tells opener that game is unlikely unless he has a powerhouse – 21 or more points. With seven points or more, responder will bid one no trump with balanced distribution and a five plus card suit with unbalanced distribution, at the two level if it is a minor. The problem distribution as usual is 4-4-4-1. With that distribution, responder bids his (best) four card minor. Any bid other than one diamond is invitational to game.

### Bidding Sequences over One Diamond

After a one diamond response, opener bids according to his distribution and point count. If he doesn't have the 21 plus point powerhouse, his goal is to find a reasonable fit at as low a level as possible, and then shut down the bidding.

With balanced distribution, opener bids one no trump with 16-19 points. Responder will generally pass this bid. However, with a six card suit that is not likely to be useful in no trump, that is, one with a lot of holes or no side entries, responder could bid two of his suit. This is a shutout bid that will be passed by opener. This is very much like the rescue bids made over a one no trump opening except that, because we do not use Stayman after a one club – one diamond – one no trump sequence, you can bid two clubs as a shutout.

With 20-23 points and balanced distribution, opener would bid two no trump over one diamond. With 0-3 points, responder will pass. With 4-6 points, responder will bid (a) three no trump with balanced distribution; (b) three of a five card major, opener bidding 3NT with two card support and game in the major with three plus card support; (c) game in a six plus card suit; or (d) bid three of the better minor, which may be a four card suit with the old problematical 4-4-4-1 distribution. After a 3NT response to a five card major bid, responder will usually pass, but will bid a five card minor at the four level if he has one. After a minor suit response to 2NT, opener will bid a four card major, raise the minor with four card support or, if neither of those bids are available, 3NT. None of those bids are forcing, and opener will generally pass with a minimum hand.

If opener has unbalanced distribution, he will bid his best suit over the one diamond response. A bid of a major promises a five card suit. A bid of a minor promises a five card suit or 4-4-4-1 distribution. If opener has 17-20 points, he bids his suit at the cheapest level. The partnership then knows that the chances of making game are about zero, and the goal is to find a reasonable suit, i.e. at least seven cards between the two hands, and pass. Thus, responder will pass one of a major with two card support and two of a minor with three card support. Without even that support, responder will bid a five card suit or, if he has none, the cheapest no trump. Opener will (a) pass with two card support, but if not, (b) rebid his suit with six plus cards, but if not, (c) bid his second suit with a true two suiter (5-5-x-x or better) but if not, (d) bid (or pass) a no trump bid.

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bids are slam tries. Opener's responses to Stayman are the same as at the two level except that, with both majors, opener will bid three hearts. Opener's response to three of a major will be three no trump with two card support and four of the major with three plus card support.

If opener has 21 points or more, he jump bids in his suit. This is a one round force. Responder will make a weak bid – a single raise with three plus card support or the cheapest no trump without that support – with 0-3 points. With 4-6 points, responder will bid a new suit or jump to game in opener's suit. Over a major suit bid, responder could also jump to three no trump and would likely do so with a doubleton or less in opener's suit and no good five card suit of his own. Over a minor suit bid, three no trump is a weak bid (not a jump), and responder will usually temporize with a suit bid at the three level, which could be of a weak four card suit. A new suit bid is a game force, and opener will (a) raise responder's suit with four card support; (b) re-bid his suit with six plus cards; (c) bid his second suit with unbalanced distribution, 5-4-x-x or better; or (d) bid three no trump with semi-balanced distribution, e.g. balanced except for shortness in responder's suit.

### Bidding Sequences over One of a Major

When responder bids one of a major, he is promising (a) a five plus card suit and (b) at least seven points. Thus, the partnership has at least 24 combined points and can bid safely to the three level. With a couple of extra points above the minimum, the partnership should be thinking of game.

The partnership job is, first, to find an eight card or better fit, preferably in a major, or settle on no trump if there isn't one and, second, to find out if the partnership has the couple of extra points above the minimum so as to be able to make game. To find a fit, the partnership uses normal bidding practices, namely:

1. If a partner realizes there is an eight card or better fit in the other partner's suit, raise it.
2. If you re-bid your suit without support, you are promising one more card in the suit than you promised before.
3. With balanced or semi-balanced (i.e. balanced except for shortness in partner's suit) distribution and no un-bid five plus card suit, bid no trump.
4. A new suit bid promises at least four cards and is a one round force.

The simplest case is where opener has three card or better support for responder's major. As with responding to a major suit opening bid, opener should raise partner's major even if he has a very good suit of his own, accepting partner's suit as the trump suit. With a minimum 7 to 8 points, responder will re-raise to three of the major, and opener will decide whether to go on to game (or try for slam with a 24 point powerhouse). With 9 or more points, opener should make a cue bid, or the suitless cue bid of two no trump if he has no ace or void to show. This signals to partner that they have the strength to bid game. At that point, neither hand has limited its point count – opener shown 17 or more and responder 9 or more. It is important that the partners keep cue bidding as long as they have extra points to show so that they can tell if slam or grand slam is a possibility, each cue bid showing at least two points above the previously promised minimum. Thus, in the following sequence – 1 Club, 1 Heart, 2 Hearts, 3 Clubs, 3 Diamonds, 3 No Trump – responder has shown 11 or more points and control of clubs (and denied control of

spades) and opener should be thinking about slam with 20 points or more. On the other hand, opener has shown 19 or more points in support of the major and control of diamonds, so responder should be thinking of slam with 12 or more points.

If opener does not have at least three card support of responder's major, he will make the cheapest bid of another suit or no trump. He will do so regardless of his strength. Any bid he makes is forcing for one round, and if he has a real blockbuster hand heading towards slam, he will be able to tell that story later. The bidding sequences following a one no trump bid are covered below. If opener bids a suit over one of a major, he is promising at least five cards in that suit, because, without a five card suit and without support, he would be balanced or semi-balanced and would bid no trump. If opener's suit is a major and responder has at least three card support, he will raise. Because opener's bid was forcing, a single raise would show a minimum, 7 to 8 point, hand and could be passed if opener also has a minimum. Thus, if responder has 9 or more points, he should jump raise to show the points and ensure the hand is not passed out below game.

If opener's suit is a minor, responder should raise with four card support, knowing there is at least a 5-4 fit, jumping with 9 or more points to show extra strength. The jump bid is forcing and therefore forces to game, having been made at the four level (1 Club – 1 Heart or Spade – 2 Clubs or Diamonds – 4 Clubs or Diamonds). You may be concerned that, if opener has a minimum 17 points, game in a minor will be bid with only 26 points instead of 28. That is true, but a 5-4 fit is often worth a couple of points of playing strength, so game in the minor should be a good bet.

If responder only has three card support of opener's minor, he will delay showing that support if there is a reasonable chance of finding a major suit fit or playing in no trump. Thus, with a six card major, he would rebid it, jumping if he has 9 or more points. If his other major is biddable, at least four cards, he would bid it at the two level. And if he has a balanced or semi-balanced hand, he will bid no trump, two no trump with a minimum 7 or 8 points and three no trump with 9 or more. If opener rejects these suggestions, rebidding his suit or bidding the other minor, responder can then show his support. If none of those bids is available, responder would raise opener's minor directly, jumping to show points for game, at least 10 given that they are headed for a minor suit game with only a 5-3 fit.

With less than three card support of opener's minor, responder would make the same bids as above – a rebid, a new major or no trump – if those bids were available. If not, responder's other minor must be biddable, and he will bid it, at the three level if necessary. If opener rejects responder's suggestion, responder will have to decide the best bid, and often the best contract, but will usually have enough information to do so. For example, if the bidding has gone 1 Club – 1 Heart – 2 Clubs – 2 Hearts – 2 No Trump, responder knows that opener has 5-4-3-1 distribution with five clubs and a singleton heart (with six clubs, he would have rebid them; with a doubleton heart, he would have raised; and with a void in hearts or a second five card suit, he would have bid another suit) and probably 17 to 18 points. With a minimum hand, responder would

generally pass unless he had 6-5-x-x distribution (in which case he would bid his second suit, knowing there was at least an eight card fit) or a seven card heart suit (in which case he would bid three hearts). With a couple of extra points, he could bid three no trump with semi-balanced distribution, four hearts with a seven card suit or, if neither of those bids are available, three of his second suit.

Note that we are requiring about 26 partnership points to bid three no trump. It is true that three no trump is usually a good contract with 24 points when the points are evenly distributed between the hands, but here we have one hand much stronger than the other and something of a misfit, so there will likely be communication problems necessitating extra strength. Note also that we said opener's two no trump rebid probably showed 17 to 18 points. Ordinarily the cheapest no trump bid promises a minimum hand, but that is not the case when the no trump bidder opened the bidding with one club. There are too many cases where requiring opener to bid three no trump over a two level bid with a nineteen point hand would excessively crowd the bidding, so we make an exception to give the one club bidder more flexibility. The two no trump bid is still not forcing and still suggests a minimum. And a two no trump bid by responder over a two level bid still shows a minimum, 7 to 8 points.

### Bidding Sequences Over a One No Trump Response

Other than in response to a one diamond bid, there are three ways that a bid of one no trump can be made after a one club opening. The first is when responder has balanced distribution and 7+ points. He will bid one no trump over a one club opening. The second is when responder has bid one of a major and opener is balanced or semi-balanced without support of the major. Opener will bid one no trump over responder's major. The third, quite rare, is where responder bids one heart, opener bids one spade, and responder, being semi-balanced, bids one no trump. Note that, in the latter two cases, the no trump bid denies three card support of partner's major.

After each of these no trump bids, the tools described in the No Trump Sequences section above are used to determine the best contract: Stayman, three of a major asking for support, Gerber, jumps to game with a six card suit, and a variation of the rescue bids. However, the way these tools are applied is different in a couple of respects. In describing the application, we will use the term "no trump bidder" to refer to the player who bid one no trump and "no trump responder" for his partner.

We will describe the bidding conditions based on the no trump bidder's and the no trump responder's minimum hands rather than on absolute points because the absolute points depend on whether the weak hand is the no trump bidder or the strong hand is but the bidding sequences don't. If the opener is the no trump bidder, a minimum hand has 16 to 17 high card points, but if the opener is the no trump responder, a minimum hand is just the minimum for a one club opening bid, which may have fewer than 16 high card points. Similarly, when the responder is the no trump bidder, he is expected to have at least 7 high card points but as no trump responder, he can only be expected to have at least seven playing points.

With balanced distribution and a minimum hand, the no trump responder will bid two no trump, invitational to game. Note that this bid could be made when the no trump responder knows the partnership has 24 high card points. When the high card strength is evenly divided between the hands, 24 points would be enough to bid game in no trump, but when the points are concentrated in one hand as they are after a one club opening, communication will be difficult, and 24 points is only good enough for an invitation. If the no trump bidder has a couple of points above a minimum hand, he will accept the invitation, exploring the possibility of a major suit game in the same way a player opening with one no trump does after a two no trump response.

If the no trump responder has a five or more card major and a minimum hand, he bids the suit at the two level.\* (We should not have to point out that, if this is a rebid of the major, as in 1 Club, 1 Heart, 1 No Trump, 2 Hearts, that promises a six card suit.) With minimum points, the no trump bidder will pass with an eight card fit and bid two no trump with a doubleton in the major. With a couple of extra points, the no trump bidder will bid game in the major with an eight card fit and bid three no trump with a doubleton. With a powerhouse with slam possibilities, the no trump bidder can bid three of the major which, in effect, asks partner to show a control if he has one.

If the no trump responder has a six card minor suit and a minimum hand, he will bid the minor at the two level for diamonds and at the three level for clubs. This is the analogue of the rescue bid over a one no trump opening, except that it is known that the hands have combined points of at least twenty-three, so the bid is invitational. The no trump bidder will pass with a minimum hand and raise with enough points for game. Consistent with the general theme that one goes slowly with a stronger hand, the no trump bidder will bid game directly where the total partnership points are less than 31. With more points, the no trump bidder will raise the two bid to three, giving the no trump responder the chance to cue bid to show controls in order to explore slam.

If the no trump responder has a couple of extra points over the minimum, he classifies his hand as (a) having a five card major; (b) being balanced, (c) having a 6 plus card suit or (d) all other, just as he would over a one no trump opening. The bidding is also just like over a one no trump opener. With a five card major, the no trump responder bids three of the major, asking the no trump bidder to raise with three card support and otherwise bid three no trump. With a balanced hand, the no trump responder would either bid three no trump directly or, with a four card major, use Stayman to explore a major suit fit. With a six card suit, the no trump responder would bid the suit at the four level. (Note that, if the no trump responder has already bid the suit, he would need seven cards to bid game directly because the no trump bidder is allowed to bid no trump with a singleton in responder's major. With just six cards, the no trump responder would bid the suit at the three level, showing six cards through the rebid, and the no trump bidder would raise with a doubleton or bid three no trump with a singleton.) In all other cases, the no trump

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\* If the partnership is playing Stayman Invitational, they can agree to use that convention to handle five card majors with a minimum after a 1 Club -- -- 1NT sequence, reserving the two of a major bid for six card suits. That is, however, not formally a part of the Simplified Club System.

responder would bid two clubs Stayman, followed by a bid of his minor suit if a major suit fit was not found.

### Bidding Sequences Over Two of a Minor

If responder has an unbalanced hand without a five card major, he will either have 4-4-4-1 distribution or a five plus card minor. With 5-3-3-2 distribution, responder will almost always bid one no trump. But with 4-4-4-1 distribution, a six plus card minor, or a two suited hand (at least 5-4-x-x) with a five card minor, responder will bid two of his (better) minor. However, because of the strong possibility of playing the hand in a minor suit, responder should have at least eight points to make the bid. As a result of that extra strength, it is generally safe to bid to the four level after a one club – two of a minor sequence.

Consistent with the preference for major suit contracts, if opener has a five card or better major suit, he will bid it regardless of his support for responder's minor. Responder will raise the major to three with three or four card support. If opener has the playing strength to be thinking about slam, in the range of 21 points, he will make a cue bid. Otherwise, he will just bid game in his major.

If he doesn't have a five card major, opener will raise responder's minor with five card support, to three with a minimum and to four with a couple of extra points. Responder will then decide whether to go to game, pass the three bid with a minimum, or cue bid to show slam interest.

With less than four card support of responder's minor and no five card major, opener will bid his own six or more card minor if he has one and otherwise will bid two no trump. The two no trump bid is basically a waiting bid asking responder to further describe his hand. Responder will oblige by bidding a four card major if he has one, rebidding his minor with six cards in the suit, or bidding his other minor with four or more cards in it. If he can't make any of those bids, he must be balanced and should bid three no trump. On the basis of responder's bid, opener should be able to decide the best contract, making an invitational bid for a minor suit game with a minimum hand. For example, with three card support of responder's clubs, no five card major and a five card diamond suit, the bidding might go:

One Club:	17 or more points (or 16 high card points)
Two Clubs:	8 or more points, 5 clubs or 4-4-4-1
Two No Trump:	Waiting bid, no major, no 6 card minor
Three Diamonds:	At least 5-4 in clubs and diamonds
Four Diamonds:	A diamond fit, a minimum 17-18 points, invite game
Pass:	Reject the invitation, a minimum 8-9 points

Let's look at how this all works with a few hands:

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ K Q 6 ♥ 9 3 ♦ A K Q 7 3 ♣ K 10 6  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ 9 7 4 ♥ A J 8 7 4 ♦ 10 4 ♣ Q 8 7	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	North	1 C	17+ points or 16 high card points
	South	1 H	7 + points, five plus card Heart suit
	North	2D	Five plus card Diamond suit, 17+ points, at most two Hearts.
	South	2 NT	Minimum hand (7-8 points), exactly five Hearts, denies a four card Spade suit.
	North	Pass	Minimum hand. No fit in Spades, Hearts or Diamonds, fit in Clubs possible but unlikely. Insufficient points for 3NT.

This next hand has some interesting issues:

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ A Q 10 ♥ A K J 7 3 ♦ 8 7 3 ♣ A 6  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ K 8 ♥ 10 9 6 ♦ K 10 6 4 2 ♣ K 7 4	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	North	1 C	17+ points or 16 high card points
	South	2 D	8+ points, five card Diamond suit (or 4-4-4-1 with a singleton Club)
	North	2 H	17+ points, five card Heart suit
	South	3 H	Eight card fit
	North	3 S	Cue bid: 19+ points, control of Spades
	South	3 NT	Extra points (9+) but no controls to show
	North	4 H	No additional points to show (shows 19-20).
	South	Pass	No more than 30 combined points, stop at game.

In the alternative, South could respond with one no trump. North would bid three hearts showing a five card suit, and South would bid four with three card support. With the South hand shown, we would tend to recommend bidding one no trump, but give South the queen and jack of diamonds instead of the four and two, and the two diamond bid would be recommended because, as shown by the bidding above, it would facilitate exploring slam possibilities.

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ K 10 ♥ A Q 10 7 3 ♦ K 9 ♣ K J 10 6  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ Q 9 7 4 ♥ J 8 ♦ A 10 5 4 ♣ 8 7 4	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	North	1 C	17+ points or 16 high card points
	South	1 NT	7 + points, balanced hand, no five card major
	North	2 H	Five plus card Heart suit, 17 - 18 points.
	South	2 S	Four card Spade suit, ambiguous as to strength, one round force. A pass would also be acceptable for a minimum hand with a seven card fit.
	North	2 NT	Denies 4 card Spade support. Unwilling to bid 3 Clubs with a minimum, semi-balanced hand.
	South	Pass	Minimum hand (7-8 points) opposite minimum hand, unwilling to go to the three level (e.g. 3 Diamonds)

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ A K 10 8 7 ♥ A J 8 3 ♦ - ♣ A J 10 6  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ 9 ♥ 10 9 6 4 ♦ Q 10 6 4 2 ♣ K 7 4	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
	North	1 C	17+ points or 16 high card points
	South	1 D	0 - 6 points
	North	1 S	17+ points, five card Spade suit
	South	2D	4 – 6 points, at most one spade, 5+ card suit
	North	2 H	No support for diamonds, 4+ cards in hearts
	South	3H	Point count is 8 in support of hearts, invite game
	North	4H	Maximum hand (19-20 points)

Four hearts is odds on to make. Indeed, when this hand was actually played, the queen of clubs was on side, the heart honors split, and North was able to ruff two spades in the South hand, making six. In Standard American, North would open one spade, and South would pass.

### **Defensive Bidding**

The Simplified Club system does not have any special rules for defensive bidding, and the Standard American practices are generally adopted. This makes sense because any opening bid by the opponents takes away the one club opening that is the essential cornerstone of the Simplified Club system.

In particular, overcalls can be made with a good suit with as few as 8 points and are limited to no more than 16. With 17 or more points, a take out double followed by the

long suit bid is used, effectively a substitute for the one club opening. Take out doubles require 13+ points counting distribution as a supporting hand and imply shortness in opponent's suit and no biddable. i.e. 5+ card, suit (except for the 17+ point hand). Given that the opponents have indicated a suit to attack in no trump, a one no trump overcall should be stronger than a one no trump opening, 15 to 16 points, and promises a solid stopper in the suit bid by the opponents. Preemptive bids are unchanged: a jump overcall to the two level is a standard weak two bid, and a jump overcall to the three level is a standard seven card suit preempt. The partnership can use Michaels cue bids and unusual no trumps by agreement. Those bids are now included in Standard American bidding.

### **Competitive Bidding**

In general, interference bids by the opponents are ignored. There are, of course, times when they cannot be. For example, any bid by opponents over a one club opening eliminates the possibility of a one diamond response but also makes available another bid, the double. When the opponents bid over one club, responder (a) passes with six or fewer points, (b) bids a suit or no trump with 7-8 points and (c) doubles (or redoubles) with 9+ points.

Similarly, a suit bid by opponents over a one no trump opening takes away Stayman. A double of such a bid shows game going points and asks opener to bid a four card or better suit, and two no trump if his only long suit is the one the opponents bid.

Cue bidding the opponent's suit and negative doubles can be adopted from Standard American but are not a necessary part of the Simplified Club system. That is, if the partners agree, a cue bid of opponent's suit shows support for opener's suit and a game going hand, and a negative double (i.e. a double of an intervening opponent bid at the one or two level) shows at least four cards in each un-bid major.

### **Preemptive Bidding**

The Simplified Club system does not address preemptive bidding. However, with all strong hands being opened one club, using weak twos is a natural addition to the bidding arsenal. The guidelines for opening bids or weak jump overcalls at the three or four level can be adopted from Standard American.

### **Optional Conventions**

There are a number of situations where the basic Simplified Club system is inadequate to give the bidders enough information to select the best contract. A number of conventions have been developed to help address these situations. Because they are not natural bids, it is recommended that they not be adopted when first using the Simplified Club system. However, as you become more comfortable with Simplified Club bidding, you may find some of these conventions useful.

Stayman Invitational

As noted in the description of no trump bidding, if the person responding to a one no trump opening has 11 to 12 points and a five card major, they want to know both whether the no trump bidder has three card support of the major suit and whether the no trump bidder has a maximum hand supporting a game level contract. The basic Simplified Club system does not provide the tools for that.

The Stayman Invitational convention is designed to address that specific situation. If you have a five card major and 11 to 12 points, you bid two clubs over a one no trump opening. If opener responds with a suit lower ranked than yours (2 diamonds, or 2 hearts when your suit is spades) you bid your suit at the two level. Opener can tell exactly what this means – you have a five card suit because you bid it even though four card support was denied and you have fewer than 13 points because you did not jump directly to three. And you must have more than ten points because you didn't make a shut out bid. He will therefore (a) pass with 3 card support and a minimum, (b) bid 2NT with two card support and a minimum, (c) bid game in your major with three card support and a maximum or (d) bid 3NT with two card support and a maximum. If opener bids your major, either in reality or virtually, by bidding two no trump, you raise to three. This is just what it sounds like, an invitational bid, and opener will raise to game with a maximum.

The case we haven't covered is where opener responds two spades to Stayman and your suit is hearts. This presents a problem. You do not want to bid three hearts because the hand probably should be played in two no trump if opener has a doubleton heart and a minimum hand. To solve this problem, we have a truly artificial bid. Over the two spade bid, you bid two no trump. With a minimum hand, opener will pass with a doubleton heart and bid three hearts with three card support. With a maximum, opener will bid game in no trump with a doubleton heart or in hearts with three card support. Bidding no trump to show a heart suit is certainly unnatural, and this is a difficult sequence to remember at the table. However, it is a logical way to address the problem, and there is no natural reason to bid two no trump over Stayman, so it should be clear that it is an artificial bid. And by the way, people who play Jacoby Transfers should find this approach familiar.

Stayman invitational also handles the situation where responder has a six card suit with 11 to 12 points. Responder can be reasonably sure that the hand will play well in his major but wants to know if opener has a maximum or a minimum. If playing Stayman Invitational, responder would bid two clubs over the one no trump opening and then bid his major at the three level whatever opener bids. This tells opener that responder has a six card suit and is invitational to game. Opener will pass with a minimum and bid four of the major with a maximum.

This is an example of bidding using the Stayman invitational convention.

<b>NORTH</b> ♠ A Q J 3 ♥ 9 3 6 ♦ K Q 7 6 ♣ K 10  <b>SOUTH</b> ♠ 8 5 2 ♥ A Q J 7 4 ♦ A 4 ♣ 7 4 3	<b>HAND</b>	<b>BID</b>	<b>CO MENT</b>
	North	1 NT	12 – 15 points, balanced
	South	C	Stayman, asking for majors. 13+ points or 11-12 and five card major.
	North	2 S	Four Spades, denying four Hearts.
	South	2 NT	Five card Heart suit, 11-12 points.
	North	H	Maximum hand and three card support of Hearts.

If you were not playing Stayman invitational, South would have raised one no trump to two, which North would have raised to three. Using the Stayman invitational convention gets you to a four heart contract, a significantly safer contract because of the threat of opponents running clubs in no trump.

#### Four Diamonds Asking

There are a few occasions where, in deciding whether to push for slam, you want to know whether your partner has a maximum or a minimum hand. This is generally when you are in a no trump sequence because cue bidding is usually an effective way of communicating hand strength in a suit contract. The Four Diamonds Asking convention addresses this situation. Whenever Gerber is available, that is, whenever a four club bid has no natural meaning, a four diamond bid also has no natural meaning, and the Four Diamonds Asking convention uses the four diamond bid as an asking bid in those situations. The other partner responds to the four diamonds bid with four hearts with a minimum hand and four spades with at least two points above the minimum number of points indicated by the prior bidding. Over a four heart bid, a bid of four no trump is a sign-off. Over a four spade bid, a bid of four no trump is Blackwood. With a few exceptions, the four diamond bidder takes control of the bidding and decides the final contract.

The occasions when the Four Diamonds Asking convention is useful are limited, but it can be a valuable tool in those situations. For example, if your partner opens one no trump and you have 17 points with a four card heart suit, you would use Stayman to explore a heart fit. If your partner responded two hearts, you would know you had a fit, but you wouldn't know if partner had a maximum, in which case slam is likely, or a minimum, in which case it is not. Cue bidding is not available in that sequence, so the four diamonds asking bid is a good way to explore slam. If partner responds four hearts, you would pass. If he responds four spades, you would either bid slam directly or, if you needed to find out about aces, use Blackwood on the way to slam.

#### Fit Showing Jump Shift

One of the problems with the Simplified Club system is that, because your first duty is to show a fit, and once a fit is found, subsequent bids of other suits are cue bids, the partnership will miss a second fit. The second fit may be better than the first, and in any event, hands with a double fit often have very good playing strength, allowing game to be bid with one or two fewer points than one would ordinarily expect.

The Fit Showing Jump Shift convention provides some help for this problem. When your partner has opened with one of a major, a jump bid to three of a lower ranking suit shows, first, that you have at least three card support of your partner's major,, second, that you have at least five cards in the suit you bid and, third, that you have at least 11 points in support of your partner's major.

With no second suit fit, or with an absolute minimum (13 point) hand, your partner will retreat to his major. With a minimum hand, he will bid the major at the three level. With 15 or 16 points, he will bid game in the major. You will now know enough about your partner's hand to be able to pick the final contract or, if you are slam bound, to use Blackwood or cue bids to explore controls.

With strong support of partner's suit, either four cards with a few high card points or any five or more card support, it is likely that the second suit fit is better than the first. It is also likely that, with more than a bare minimum hand, you can make game. Thus, with 14 or more points, you would raise partner's suit to the four level. This is a game forcing bid. Your partner will decide which suit to play in based on the level of support you have shown for his suit. If he has good support of your major, say three cards and three or more points, or any four or more card support, it will probably be better to play in the major, that is, at the four level, and your partner will bid game in your major. Otherwise, he will bid game in his suit. Of course, if he thinks the hand is slam bound, with 16 points or more, he can make cue bids or use Blackwood to explore slam.

With 14 to 16 points and some support of your partner's suit but not enough to justify a raise, you will cue bid, including the suitless 3NT cue bid if no other is available, to show a double fit and force game. Usually your partner will just bid game in your major or use cue bids or Blackwood to explore slam, but with a significantly better suit than promised, he might bid game in his suit. You can, of course, pass any game bid.

## APPENDIX A

### Essential Elements of the Simplified Club System

#### A. Point Count Basics

1. When counting points bidding your own suit, aces count four, kings count three, queens count two and jacks count one. You give yourself one point for each card above four in a quality suit. Thus, a hand with 5-3-3-2 distribution would get one distribution point, as would a hand with 5-4-3-1 distribution. If you want a “quality standard,” use the four point rule. A quality suit has four or more high card points, or three points with extra spot cards, say a ten and nine or 9-8-7.
2. When counting point bidding in support of your partner’s suit, high cards count the same as when bidding your own suit, but with four plus card support you count one point for a doubleton, three for a singleton and five for a void. With three card support or less, count one point for a doubleton, two for a singleton and three for a void.
3. In general, the partnership needs 24 points to bid to the three level (as long as the points are reasonably balanced between the hands) 26 points to bid to the four level, 28 points to bid to the five level, 32 points to bid a small slam and 36 points to bid a grand slam.
4. Keep in mind that point counts at best give an imperfect valuation of the strength of a hand. For example, it is well known that a hand with four card support of a five card suit will play much better than a hand with four card support of a four card suit, and that a hand with a double fit plays better than one with a single fit. However, the point count method described here does not give those hands extra value. We could try to refine the point count method by adding some more rules, but the additional complexity would probably not be worth the incremental accuracy.

#### B. Opening Bid Sequences

1. All strong hands (16+ high card points or 17+ counting distribution) are opened one club.
  - a. A one diamond response shows 0-6 points. Opener will make a jump bid with 21+ points. All other bids by opener can be passed, and the hand should be passed as soon as a 7+ fit is found unless the fit adds enough distribution points to make game likely.
  - b. All other bids by responder show 7+ points. The partnership first finds a suit or picks no trump, and then a cue bid by either bidder shows 2+ points above a minimum bid and forces to game. If responder bids 1NT, opener

uses the NT conventions of Paragraph 2 to explore a fit and game, with the “rescue” bids showing a minimum hand with a five plus card suit and 2NT also showing a minimum hand. All other bids over a 1NT response show a strong interest in game, i.e. 18+ high card points or 19+ counting distribution.

- c. If opener bids 1NT over a one diamond response, responder usually passes but can make a shut out bid at the two level with a six card suit. If opener bids 1NT over a major suit response, the Paragraph 2 sequences are used with the “rescue” bids showing 7-8 points and a five plus card suit (or six plus if a rebid of the major).

2. One no trump promises balanced distribution (4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, or 5-3-3-2 with a 5 card minor) and 12-15 points.

- a. A response of two diamonds, two hearts, two spades or three clubs is a shut out “rescue” bid almost always made with a 6+ card suit. Opener will always pass these bids.
- b. With 13+ points and a 5 card major, responder bids three of the major. Opener bids 3 NT with two card support and four of the major with 3+ card support.
- c. With 13+ points and a 6+ card suit, responder bids game directly (unless strong enough to explore slam).
- d. With 13+ points and balanced distribution, responder bids 3 NT, except that, with a 4 card major, responder can first use Stayman to try for a major suit fit.
- e. With all other 13+ point hands, responder bids 2 clubs Stayman. Opener’s re-bids are standard Stayman with 2 NT showing both majors.
- f. With 11-12 points and balanced distribution, responder bids 2NT. Opener raises to game with a maximum.

3. One of a major promises a 5+ card suit and 13-16 points; a one diamond bid promises 14-16 points and a 5+ card suit or 4-4-4-1 distribution.

- a. With 3+ card support, responder raises with 11+ points (but over one diamond, should bid a 5+ card major if he has one) and passes with 10 or less. If either partner cue bids after a raise, game is forced. Note that over 1 diamond-2 diamonds, a new suit bid is natural, not a cue bid, and promises 4-4-4-1 distribution. Opener shows a 5+ diamond suit and extra strength with the suitless cue bid of 2NT.

- b. Without support and 0-7 points, responder passes.
  - c. With 8-10 points and two card support, responder passes. With a singleton or void in opener's suit, responder bids a five card suit or no trump at the one level. [Opener may pass with a minimum, will raise with support and a maximum to cover (d).]
  - d. With 11-12 points and less than three card support, responder bids a 5+ card suit, at the two level if necessary, or 1NT with a semi-balanced hand. If opener raises responder's one level bid, showing a maximum and support, responder should bid game. Responder's two level bid is a one round force. With a maximum, opener will make a forcing bid (a new suit or a jump) over responder's two level bid to drive to game.
  - e. With 13+ points and less than three card support, responder bids a 5+ card suit at the two level or 2NT. If that is a jump bid, game is forced, and the only issue is the best suit (see Section C below). If it is not, responder is responsible for keeping the bidding open with forcing bids (new suits, jumps, cue bids) until game is reached.
4. Two clubs opening promises 14-16 points and a 5+ card club suit or 4-4-4-1 with a singleton diamond.
- a. Responder will bid a 5+ card suit at the two level with 11+ points, which can be shaved to 10 or even 9 points with a good suit and 2 or fewer clubs. Opener will raise with 3+ card support, bid a second (4 card) suit at the two level, bid 2NT with a semi-balanced hand, re-bid clubs with a 6+ card suit or bid a second (4 card) suit at the three level, in that order of preference.
  - b. Responder will bid 2NT with a semi-balanced hand and 11+ points. Opener will bid his lowest 4 card suit, rebid clubs with 6+ cards, or bid 3NT.
  - c. With 4+ clubs and no other 5+ card suit, responder will raise with 11+ points, pass with 10 or fewer. Opener will bid a four card major if he has one. If not, he will bid 4 clubs with a minimum (14 or a poor 15 points) and five clubs with a maximum.

## C. Finding a Fit

### 1. General rules

- a. The bid of a new suit (prior to a fit being found) promises 4+ cards and is a one round force (i.e. partner must bid at least one more time).

- b. A rebid of a previously bid suit shows one more card than previously shown.
  - c. With balanced or semi-balanced (that is, balanced except for shortness in partner's suit) distribution and no unbid 5+ card minor or 4+ card major or rebiddable suit, bid NT. (Also bid NT if balanced or semi-balanced at the three level and bidding an unbid suit or rebidding a long suit would take you to the four level.)
2. If you know there is an 8+ card fit, your first duty is to show it by:
    - a. Passing if you know there are insufficient points for game and partner's bid was not forcing.
    - b. Making a single raise if (i) partner's bid was forcing and you have a minimum hand for your prior bids or (ii) partner's bid was not forcing and you know there are enough points for game or you have 2+ more points than previously shown.
    - c. Jump raise if partner's bid was forcing and you have 2+ more points than previously shown.
    - d. BUT never bid over game unless you are making a slam try (usually by using Blackwood or Gerber)
  3. If you are still searching for a fit and you know the partnership has enough points for game:
    - a. In general, it is your obligation to make a forcing bid, namely a bid of a previously unbid suit or a jump bid in a previously bid suit, as required to keep partner from passing below game.
    - b. First Exception: If you have already shown enough points so that partner knows there are enough points for game, you no longer need to make forcing bids.
    - c. Second Exception: If a jump bid would take you over 3NT and you have a semi-balanced hand, make it a single raise instead.
    - d. Third exception: If a new suit bid would take you over 3NT and you are semi-balanced, bid 3NT instead. (In the alternative, if you have available a less preferred new suit bid available at the 3 level, make that.)
  4. If you are still searching for a fit and you do not know there are enough points for game:
    - a. If you know there are not enough points for game or if you think the partnership is already at too high a level, make a weak bid:
      - i. First choice, pass if not forced and a 7+ card fit

- ii. Second Choice, rebid your rebiddable suit at the current level
  - iii. Third Choice, if forced, rebid your rebiddable suit up one level (not a jump)
  - iv. Fourth Choice, support one of partner's suits at the current level with a 7+ card fit.
  - v. Fifth choice, if none of the above are available, bid the cheapest available NT
  - vi. If partner bid NT and you are not forced, pass. If forced, first choice is to rebid rebiddable suit, second choice is to raise NT.
  - vii. BUT never bid over game.
- b. If you think game is possible:
- i. If you are at the minimum end of your previously disclosed point range, make a weak bid as in 4.a. above (except pass).
  - ii. If you have 2+ undisclosed points, make your best bid according to the general rules in C.1. above. Note: if your best bid would be 2NT and would be the cheapest NT (always weak) bid 3NT instead. Bids of the cheapest available no trump and pass are the two unambiguously weak bids.

#### D. Optional Conventions

1. Stayman Invitational: When playing Stayman invitational, with 11-12 points and a five card major, responder can bid Stayman over a one no trump opening bid and then bid his major. Responder's 2NT bid over NT bidder's 2 spade response to Stayman shows a 5 card heart suit. NT bidder picks the final contract. Examples: 1NT - 2C - 2H - 3H (NT bidder raises to game with a max). 1NT - 2C - 2D - 2S (with 2 spades, NT bidder bids 2NT with a minimum, 3NT with a max; with 3 spades, pass with a minimum, raise to game with a max).
2. Four Diamonds Asking: Whenever 4C would be Gerber, a bid of 4D asks partner to show points. A response of 4H shows a minimum hand, and a response of 4S shows a maximum. Over a 4H response, a bid of 4NT is a shut out. Over a 4S response, a bid of 4NT is Blackwood.
3. Fit Showing Jump Shift: Over an opening bid of one in a major, a jump bid to the three level of a lower ranking suit shows a five plus card reasonable quality suit, at least three card support of the major, and at least 11 points. With no fit for responder's suit, opener will bid 3 of the major with a minimum and 4 of the major with a maximum. With a fit and at least 14 points (opener will bid 3 of the major with just 13 points) opener will (a) bid game in responder's suit with strong (at least 4 cards and a few high card points) support, (b) raise responder's suit to four with at least 3

card support and a minimum or (c) cue bid with support and a maximum. Responder picks the final contract.