

After Opener's Strong 2 NT Rebid

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This article is a replacement section for *EZ Expert Bidding Tools, Second Edition*, pages 168-171. [Back to Sitka fonts, 8 Jan 2026]

Opener's standard jump or raise to two notrump shows a balanced hand of about 18 to 19 HCP: a hand between a strong 1 NT and a strong 2 NT opening. In standard methods, anything responder bids over 2 NT is forcing. The modern default of standard new minor forcing improves forward-going auctions, but it does not let us escape from 2 NT on a weak hand with shape.

Playing Walsh style (page 107), as many experts do, we respond 1 ♠ to 1 ♣ with:

1. ♠ K 8 7 3 ♥ 7 ♦ Q 9 7 5 3 2 ♣ 8 2

If opener rebids 2 NT, on hand [1] we would like to sign off in 3 ♦, likely a much better contract.

2. ♠ K 10 8 7 4 3 ♥ 7 2 ♦ 9 5 3 ♣ 8 2

After opener rebids 2 NT over our 1 ♠ response on hand [2], we would like to offer 3 ♠ as a better final contract. (Pairs who respond “up the line” to 1 ♣ or who play weak jump shifts won't want to sign off over 2 NT as often.) On the same auction, we would want opener to choose between playing 3 ♥ and 3 ♠ on hand [3]:

3. ♠ K 10 8 7 4 ♥ Q 9 7 2 ♦ 5 3 ♣ 8 2

Wolff sign-off and expert transfer methods handle responder's forward-going hands well and let us escape to three of a suit. [♦¹⁷](#)

❑ Wolff Sign-Off with 3 ♦ Checkback

This plan is best for when opener jumps to 2 NT over a *major suit response*, and that's what this section is about. Later, we'll discuss opener's 2 NT rebid over a 1 ♦ or 1 NT response.

Sign-off or slam try. 3 ♣ over 2 NT is a relay to 3 ♦:

Pass On hand [1] – we play 3 ♦ – opener must not break the relay!

3 ♠ On hand [2] – opener is asked to pass, but may raise.

3 ♥ On hand [3] – opener is asked to pick, but may bid game.

Checkback. 3 ♦ is checkback, promising either five cards in the first major or four cards in the other major. As usual [planned update to page 108], with both majors, it is best to agree to show 3-card support. This avoids leaking information about the other major that partner does not need. (Use the same method in all such situations.)

R2	O3	R3	1 x – 1 M; 2 NT: Wolff Sign-Off/Checkback	
3 ♣	Relay to 3 ♦.			
	3 ♦	Required relay.		
		Pass	Sign off in diamonds.	
		3 ♥	Sign off – pass or correct to 3 ♠.	
		3 ♠	[M] Sign off in spades.	
		3 ♠	[oM] Obsolete: 4-4 majors.	
		3 NT	Mild slam try in opener's minor suit.	
		Other	Natural slam try; implies broken suit.	
3 ♦	Major-suit checkback, with either 5+ cards in the bid major, or 4 cards in the other major. See above.			
3 ♥, 3 ♠	Natural slam try: a 6-card or longer good suit (two of the top three honors), or at least 5-5 majors.			
3 NT	Natural, to play.			
	○ [a] Gerber/diamonds		◻ [b] slam/RKB opener's minor.	
4 ♣	Gerber for aces (0 or 4, 1, 2, 3).		4 m	Natural slam try with good 5+ card support.
4 ♦	Natural slam try, good 6-card suit, or good 5-card support.		4 om	RKB in opener's minor (crosswood).
4 ♥, 4 ♠	Natural, to play: a 6-card suit or longer, or at least 5-5 majors; opener may correct to original spades.			
4 NT	Natural, quantitative.			

Slam options. By default, four clubs is Gerber here. When we are not looking at the king and queen of our suit, it's inadequate. Assuming we remember it, option [b] in the chart is a better plan. This gives up the unlikely natural slam try at 4 ♦, when the opening bid was 1 ♣, and gains the likely natural slam try at 4 ♣. We also get RKB!

□ Expert Transfers – Outline

This plan is best for when opener jumps to 2 NT over a *suit response*, and that's what this section is about. Later, we'll discuss opener's 2 NT rebid over a 1 NT response. The points that follow the chart can be used to figure out most situations at the table.

R2	O3	R3	1 x - 1 y; 2 NT: Expert Transfers
3 ♣	Diamonds: 5+ cards (4+ in opener's suit), may have 5+ M.		
	3 ♦	Required transfer (may be a sign-off).	
		Pass	Sign-off in diamonds.
		3 ♥	Natural game force.
		3 ♠	Natural game force.
		3 NT	Natural, mild slam try.
3 ♦	Hearts [M]: 5+ cards.		
	3 ♥	[M] Required transfer (may be a sign-off).	
		3 ♠	Natural game force.
		3 NT	Choice of games
		4 ♣	Natural slam try.
	3 ♥	[oM] Natural game force.	
3 ♦	Hearts [oM]: 4+ cards, game force.		
3 ♥	Spades [M]: 5+ cards.		
	3 ♠	[M] Required transfer (may be a sign-off).	
		3 NT	Choice of games.
		4 ♣	Natural slam try.
	3 ♠	[oM] Natural game force.	
3 ♥	Spades [oM]: 4+ cards, game force.		
3 ♠	Clubs: 5+ cards (4+ in opener's suit), game force.		
3 NT	Natural, to play.		

- In this plan, responder describes their hand to opener.
- Responder's bid over 2 NT at three of suit is a transfer (spades for clubs). No other bids are transfers.
- Responder's transfer to diamonds or to an already-bid major could be a signoff. Opener must complete such a transfer. Any further bid by responder is natural and forcing to game.
- Responder's transfer to a new major or to clubs is forcing to game. Opener bids naturally; completing the transfer sets trump.

- With no trump suit, 4 NT is quantitative and 5 NT is pick a slam.
- All moves are up the line. Skipping over something that could be shown denies it (like when we control-bid for slam).

Examples – after { 1 ♣ – 1 ♠; 2 NT }

[The first three are repeated and updated from above.]

1. ♠ K 8 7 3 ♥ 7 ♦ Q 9 7 5 3 2 ♣ 8 2

Wolff auction:

We bid 3 ♣, a relay to 3 ♦.

Opener must not break the relay and bids 3 ♦. We pass, likely a much better contract than 2 NT.

Transfer auction:

We bid 3 ♣, showing 5+

diamonds. Because we might wish to sign off, opener must bid 3 ♦. We pass, likely a much better contract than 2 NT.

2. ♠ K 10 8 7 4 3 ♥ 7 2 ♦ 9 5 3 ♣ 8 2

Wolff auction:

We bid 3 ♣, a mandatory relay to 3 ♦. We then bid 3 ♠, asking opener to pass.

Transfer auction:

We bid 3 ♥, a mandatory transfer with 5+ spades. We then pass 3 ♠, likely a much better contract than 2 NT.

3. ♠ K 10 8 7 4 ♥ Q 9 7 2 ♦ 5 3 ♣ 8 2

Wolff auction:

We bid 3 ♣, a mandatory relay to 3 ♦. We then bid 3 ♥, asking opener to pass or correct to 3 ♠.

Transfer auction:

We either pass 2 NT or bid 3 ♥, a mandatory transfer to spades, and pass 3 ♠. (*We cannot offer a choice: a 3 ♦ transfer to hearts, a new major, forces to game.*)

4. ♠ K 10 8 7 4 ♥ Q 9 7 2 ♦ 5 3 ♣ K 2

Wolff auction:

We bid 3 ♦, checkback. If opener bids a major suit, we raise to game; otherwise, we pass 3 NT. Having bid 3 ♠, opener bids 4 ♥ with four.

Transfer auction:

We bid 3 ♦, a game-forcing transfer to hearts. Opener bids naturally: 3 ♥ shows four and sets trump, 3 ♠ shows three, and 3 NT denies both.

5. ♠ K 10 8 7 4 ♥ Q 9 2 ♦ 7 5 3 ♣ K 2

Wolff auction:

We bid 3 ♦, checkback. If opener bids spades, we raise to game; otherwise, we bid or pass 3 NT.

Transfer auction:

We bid 3 ♥, a mandatory transfer to a 5+ card spade suit. We then bid 3 NT, offering a choice of games.

6. ♠ K Q 7 4 ♥ A 7 ♦ 8 3 ♣ K Q 9 3 2

Wolff auction:

Playing plan [b], jump to 4 ♣, a good-suit natural slam try (in support). Without that option, bid 3 ♣ and then 3 NT over the 3 ♦ relay - the way we would bid with the either queen replaced with a jack or ten.

Transfer auction:

Bid 3 ♠, a transfer to clubs with only four spades. Over 3 NT, bid 4 NT, quantitative. Over 4 ♣, bid 4 ♦ (RKB ♣).

7. ♠ K Q 7 4 ♥ A 7 ♦ 8 ♣ A Q 10 9 3 2

Wolff auction:

Playing plan [b], jump to 4 ♦, RKB ♣. Otherwise, bid 3 ♣ and then 4 ♣ over the 3 ♦ relay. With plan [b], this sequence would show a bad suit with slam interest; with plan [a], this sequence serves double duty.

Transfer auction:

Bid 3 ♠, a transfer to clubs with only four spades. Over 3 NT or 4 ♣, bid 4 ♦ (RKB ♣).

Examples – after { 1 ♦ – 1 ♥; 2 NT }

8. ♠ K 10 4 ♥ Q 9 8 7 2 ♦ 8 5 3 ♣ K 2

Wolff auction:

We bid 3 ♦, checkback. If opener bids hearts, we raise to game; otherwise, we bid or pass 3 NT.

Transfer auction:

We bid 3 ♦, a mandatory transfer to a 5+ card heart suit. We then bid 3 NT, offering a choice of games.

9. ♠ K 10 7 4 ♥ Q 9 8 7 2 ♦ 5 3 ♣ K 2

Wolff auction:

We bid 3 ♦, checkback. If opener bids a major suit, we raise to game; otherwise, we pass 3 NT.

Transfer auction:

We bid 3 ♦, a mandatory transfer to a 5+ card heart suit. We bid 3 ♠, forcing to game with 4+ spades. Opener bids 3 NT, 4 ♠, or bids a control.

10. ♠ K 10 7 4 ♥ Q 9 7 2 ♦ 8 5 3 ♣ K 2

Wolff auction:

We bid 3 ♦, checkback. We raise spades; otherwise, we bid or pass 3 NT. Having bid 3 ♥, opener bids 4 ♠ with four (or bids a control with a great fit).

Transfer auction:

We bid 3 ♥, forcing to game with four spades and denying five hearts. With four spades, opener sets trump at 3 ♠; otherwise opener bids 3 NT.

Look how these systems work on hands [9 & 10]. Natural bidding cannot sort out responder's forcing 4=4 and 4=5 major hands.

Opener Bids 2 NT over a 1 ♦ or 1 NT Response

The two main systems described here can be employed in either of these cases.

Opener raises a 1 NT response to 2 NT.

- Our choice above applies (Wolff or transfers).
- Three of opener's suit or a lower-ranking suit is to play (the author's simplified methods that allow us to play 3 ♣).

Slam is usually off the table here; the main need is to escape from 2 NT, when that is likely to be a bad contract. Both Wolff and transfers prevent escaping to 3 ♣.

Opener jumps to 2 NT over a 1 ♦ response.

Transfers are good for this situation. Playing Walsh, a transfer into a major suit promises four cards and an opening hand, an immediate slam try. 3 ♣ remains a mandatory transfer for a possible sign off.

Playing Wolff, a checkback makes no sense, but we need to keep it simple. The author suggests these responses:

- 3 ♣ A relay to 3 ♦, intending to pass; or clubs are trump.
- 3 ♦ Diamonds are trump, slam interest.
- 3 M Opening hand with 5+ diamonds and 4+ cards in the bid suit.

Key Features.

Wolff sign-off. After { 1 m – 1 M; 2 NT }:

- Responder's 3 ♣ is a relay to 3 ♦ for sign-off, a mild slam try in opener's minor, or a bad-suit slam try.
- Responder's 3 ♦ is a major-suit checkback.
- 3 ♥ or 3 ♠ is a natural slam try.
- Decision: Is 4 ♣ always Gerber, or do we play crosswood and a natural slam try in opener's minor?

Expert Transfers. See the bullet points below the chart.

Opener raises a 1 NT response to 2 NT. A choice:

- The agreed methods can be played.
- The author recommends that 3 of opener's suit, or a lower-ranking suit, be a sign-off – that way, we can play 3 ♣.

Opener jumps to 2 NT over a 1 ♦ response.

- Transfers are simple and effective.
- Simplified Wolff: 3 ♣ is a relay to 3 ♦, to play there or with clubs; three of another suit is natural and forcing.

Recommendation

Continue to play Wolff signoff, if already comfortable with those methods, as the author plans to do. New to this space, transfer

methods played by “all the experts” may be superior, but they are not simple. Expect bumps in the road.

Backstory

World champion Gavin Wolpert asserts: "There is no real standard among intermediate players. There is however a standard among expert players. Expert players play transfers after an 18-19 2NT rebid by opener." The outline of expert transfers (above) is based on Wolpert's master class, <https://wolpertbridge.com/lessons/transfers-after-2nt-rebid>, "Transfers after a 2NT Rebid." *Important details on the site may be omitted here.* Please take the 54-slide class (\$15) and read the comments to learn all.

My article, "Bridge Bidding Systems after Opener Rebids 2 NT," compares ten methods of handling opener's 2 NT rebid. The version of Wolff sign-off with 3 ♦ checkback that we play is based on that 2012 article. The systems described by Max Hardy and Marshall Miles differ, and more ideas are online. The original Wolff sign-off appeared on page 75 of *Aces Scientific* by Bobby Goldman (1978). It required opener to break the relay and raise responder's major with 3-card support – we don't do that, so responder can get to 3 ♦ on hand [1]. In other words, playing Walsh responses, don't break the relay.

Robert 'Bobby' Wolff was an original member of the Dallas Aces, winner of numerous ACBL and World championships, former president of the ACBL and of the World Bridge Federation. He is a member of the ACBL Hall of Fame.

♦ Alternative Methods

17-8 More Playable Methods

Wolff sign-off with 3 ♦ raise. The powerful version I recommended in 2012 can be described as "3 ♣ is a puppet to 3 ♦ for sign-off, 4-4 forcing, or slam try. 3 ♦ is an artificial raise of opener's minor." This system was attributed to George Rosenkranz on the web. We played it for a while, but the checkback version has won out. BWS plays 3 ♦ raise, along with breaking the relay.

Bowles Transfers. Long before we had expert transfers, Andy Bowles summarized his method: 3 ♣, 3 ♦, and 3 ♥ "are transfers, showing 4 cards if it's a new suit, 5 cards if it's responder's suit, 3 cards if it's opener's suit. 3 ♠ shows a good hand with clubs.... Transfers to a new, lower suit, to responder's first suit, or to opener's suit might be weak.... Any further move by responder after a transfer is game forcing." These transfers can also be played after our natural 2 NT overcall. Andrew Hanes and I have played Bowles transfers for years, without discovering any particular problems. However, we have not charted or studied the sequences.