



# Adventures in Bridge

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## *This Week in Bridge*

### **(109) 2NT Trump Suit Game Try**

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Level: 4

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#### **General**

When the auction begins 1X - 1Y - 2Y, we usually have 4-card support for our raise of partner's suit. But in some auctions, we don't have a convenient rebid and we are forced to raise on only 3-card support. For example, if we have 3-4-5-1 distribution and the auction begins 1♦ - 1♠, then we will need to raise to 2♠ with only 3-card support.

Some players (a generally older fashioned approach) choose to raise frequently on 3-card support (even with a balanced hand) if they don't have a stopper in an unbid suit.

#### *Example*

♠ 98

♥ A76

♦ KQ54

♣ A732

When the auction begins 1♦ - 1♥, these players would raise to 2♥ with this hand. Most players would rebid 1NT with this balanced hand, but players with the "frequently raise on 3-card support style" would rebid 2♥ on this hand.

If we are going to raise partner more frequently on 3-card support, then partner will need to have a way to find out what we have raised on (and even if we do so only rarely, this will be a useful tool). Let's see how this works.

#### **2N Trump Ask - 3344**

When the auction begins 1X - 1Y - 2Y (Example, 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♠), then any new suit (even returning to Opener's suit) is a Help Suit Game Try attempting to reach game in Y, our expected fit. But if Responder has only a 4-card suit then they cannot be completely confident that we actually have a fit (we might be in a 4-3 fit).

If Responder has less than an invitational hand, they will just pass. But if they have an invitational or better hand, they would like to have a way to find out if Opener is minimum or maximum and a way to find out if Opener raised on 3-cards or 4-cards. We will use a 2NT\* bid as an ask ("Trump Ask") in exactly this way.

*General Auction*

1X 1Y  
2Y 2NT\*  
—?

- 3♣\* 3-card raise, Minimum values
- 3♦\* 3-card raise, Maximum values
- 3♥\* 4-card raise, Minimum values
- 3♠\* 4-card raise, Maximum values

As you can see, Opener replies in steps showing 3-, 3+, 4-, 4+, telling Responder about their fit (3- or 4-card) and the strength of their hand (12 vs. 14). There is one additional call for when Opener is 4333 with 4-card support for partner and maximum values - 3NT. In this case, 3NT shows the hand perfectly and allows Responder to pass and let play in 3NT if they so desire.

*Example*

1♣ 1♥  
2♥ 2NT\* Asks how many ♥ Opener has and if they are a min or a max (closer to 12 or 14.)

**Is There a Downside to This Convention?**

Whenever we add a new convention to our agreements it is good to think about what are we giving up by playing this. In this case, Responder is unlikely to want to make a natural 2NT bid that would be NF and invitational. Thus, we are giving up very little by adding this agreement. Responder can still handle a balanced invitational hand by using our 2NT convention and then offering 3NT later.

*Example*

1♦ 1♠  
2♠ 2NT\*  
3♠\* 3NT

When Opener shows 4-card support with a maximum, Responder will normally bid 4♠, but with the right hand (balanced with stoppers in the unbid suits) they can still offer 3NT and see which game partner would like to play.



## **Conclusion**

Using 2NT as “a convention not a contract!” is one of the themes of modern bridge – this is an example of that. We can use 2NT, a place that we are unlikely to want to play, to simultaneously explore for a fit (ensuring we actually have a 4-4 fit) and quantifying Opener’s hand more specifically. With our 3-3+4-4+ steps we give away little information about dummy or declarer’s hand. Give this agreement a try and give yourself an excellent tool for exploring game!