

2 Way Checkback

Introduction to 2 Way Checkback

2 Way Checkback (2WCB) is an approach to bidding after a 1NT rebid by opener. It is applied after opener bids 1 of a suit, responder bids 1 of a suit and opener rebids 1NT.

There are 3 basic hand groups that responder will hold:

- Sign-Off hands
- Invitational hands
- Forcing hands

As with all conventions there is some memory work required. The basic principles are outlined below. There are some variations on this theme but what follows is the way I play it. As a note 2WCB is playable with both a standard NT system and a weak NT method.

2 Way Checkback - The Basics

The basic premise of 2WCB is that bids of 2C and 2D are both artificial. There are 4 features to the system :

- 1) The 2C response to a 1NT rebid is a forced relay to 2D. It is the start of all invitational sequences.
- 2) The 2D response to a 1NT rebid is an artificial game force (even if partner's opening bid was 1D !!). It is usually a Major suit checkback but is occasionally a prelude to showing a forcing bid in a minor.
- 3) Jump rebids by responder, in any suit, are forcing. They describe "pure" hands - good suit(s) with HCPs in long suit(s).
- 4) A 2N response to the 1N rebid is a forced relay to 3C. This is used for a sign-off in clubs or possible slam bidding descriptions if the partnership wishes to explore these.

Those are the rules. Now let's see how to apply them to the 3 basic hand groups.

2 Way Checkback - The Sign-off

Major Suit Sign-Offs

This treatment is very much the way most play it now. Responder's rebid of the original major (or 2H if 1S was the initial response) is not forward going. Below are some easy examples

1m	1S	1m	1S	1H	1S
1N	2S	1N	2H	1N	2S

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Minor Suit Sign-Offs

The approach to signing off in a minor is as follows.

1. To sign-off in 2D responder bids 2C - Opener should alert and explain as a RELAY to 2D, either to play or the start of some invitational sequence.

So if you were to hold (playing a "walsh" style)

JXXX

X

AJXXXX

XX

The auction can go 1C 1S
 1N 2C*
 2D* P

Changing the auction and responder's hand

JXXX

X

AJXXX

XXx

The auction can go 1D 1S
 1N 2C*
 2D* P

This is how responder gets back to 2D.

****Remember you can't bid 2D directly over 1N as a preference for it is an artificial force.

2. Signing off in Clubs is the only tricky part. One must bid 2N as a relay to 3C

The auction can go 1C 1S
 1N 2N*
 3C* P

Responder's hand might be something like

QXXX

X

XX

KJXXXX

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This is the drawback to 2WCB – we can't play 2C when partner opens 1C. The other drawback is the “natural” sound of 2N – but if you remember that all invitational sequences start with 2C you should be able to overcome this.

2 Way Checkback - The Invitational Hands

In present NMF methods responder bids NMF or jumps to the 3 level to show an invitational hand. Playing 2WCB responder bids 2C – forcing 2D from opener. Responder then clarifies his hand type as the example below shows

1C	1S	Responder's Bids
1N	2C*	P = to play
2D*	???	2H = Invitational values w/5+S and 4+H
		2S = Invitational with 5+S
		2N = Invitational - Natural
		3C = Invitational with C (see above)
		3D = Invitational with D
		3H = Highly Invitational w/5+S and 5+H
		3S = Highly Invitational w/6+S

As you can see the invitational sequences are very descriptive. They give more definition when compared with the NMF sequences. Admittedly there are exceptions revolving around the immediate 2N bid by responder to show a club hand that need to be remembered - this is a drawback.

2 Way Checkback - The Forcing Hands

Playing 2WCB responder has two options available to show forcing hands

- 1) Jump rebids. These tend to be “pure” hands. If jumping in the suit you responded this should show at least 6 cards in length and values in the suit (not Kxxxxx, the worst holding may be more like AJT9xx). If jumping into a new suit, responder shows at least 5-5 distribution with HCPs concentrated in the suits bids.
- 2) All other forcing hands start with responder bidding 2D over opener's 1NT rebid. This immediately establishes a game force. Opener now responds naturally. I use the following priorities for opener (Responder should remember that Opener's bidding of “a” does not deny “b” or “c”. However bidding “b” does deny “a”, and so forth.)
 - a. Bid the other Major with 4 of them
 - b. Bid partner's major with 3
 - c. Rebid good 5 card minor (or 6 card minor for hand hogs)
 - d. Bid 2N with none of the above

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So 2D usually is a “random force” type looking for a major suit fit (4 of the other major or 3 card support for bid major), a force in either minor or just some hand that does not fall into the jump rebid categories. Some examples will help clarify things responder needs to keep in mind.

AKQJT AKXX XX XX	Bid 2D – good suits but should be 5-5 to jump.
AKQJT KXX XX QXX	Bid 2D – good suits but should be 6+ to jump.
KJTXX KXXXX AQ K	Bid 2D – right shape but scattered values. Not a “pure hand”. Partner may misjudge potential of hand.

An example sequence with definitions of calls by responder follows.

1C	1S	Responder’s Bids
1N	2D*	2S = Forcing with 6+S, looks “no trumpish”
2H	???	2N = Random force 17 HCP +/-
		3C = Natural force – doesn’t fit jump requirements
		3D = Natural force – doesn’t fit jump requirements
		3H = Forcing, better than 4H
		3S = Forcing 6+ (may be 4 cd for opener’s minor??)
		3N = to play, opener can correct with 3 card S support.
		4m = splinter in support of H

2 Way Checkback - General

Note that 2WCB is used in the following 2 auctions (it actually works well in both of these)

1C	1D	1H	1S
1N		1N	

It works well in a walsh style because it allows diamonds to be a playable spot at a low level. It is also easily adapted to a weak NT system, especially when opener will bypass a major suit to show strength.

A point to discuss with your partner would be is 2WCB on in competition or only in certain auctions such as :

1C 1D 1M P	
1N P ?	

Where the bid of 1 of a major only promises 4.

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2WCB allows much definition and clarity in the invitational and forcing sequences. It is capable of relaying distribution, high card strength and location of strength information to opener so that the correct strain and level can be reached.

2 Way Checkback - Memory Work

Always remember to use 2C as a relay to 2D - to play or INVITATIONAL in some strain or NT. Now the only memory required is that if I want to invite I start with 2C....ALWAYS ...NO EXCEPTIONS.

The only thing I need to remember is that 2N is a relay to 3C I know 2N can't be invitational. Why ? Because ALL Invitational sequences start with 2C !!!

2 Way Checkback - Bonus Material

Once you mastered that 2N is a relay to 3C (and you have a good memory and an understanding partner) you can expand the bid to show different forcing hands.

1m	1M
1N	2N*
3C	???

What if responder now bids at the 3 level ? May be the following is a possible use :

3D = support for opener's m (4+) with a lower stiff

3oM = support for opener's m (4+) with a higher stiff

3M = 5-2-2-4 with 5M and 4m

3N = 4-2-2-5 with 4M and 5m

Note the inferences available to opener because responder did not jump in the minor.

2 Way Checkback - Closing

As with all conventions, be wary of overuse. Many of the above sequences are for specific hand types, so before using a bid be sure that partner can have a hand that would be able to cooperate. Partner is limited to 12-14 HCP by the 1NT rebid so there is only so much they can have to fill holes, etc.