

BLACKOUT

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In natural systems, difficulties can arise when a one over one response is followed by a reverse bid by opener. The modern trend is to treat this sequence as forcing for one round, and this makes it difficult for responder to show extra strength without going beyond the level of 3 NT.

Using the Blackout principle, the only non-forcing bid available to the responder is a simple rebid of his suit. A conventional meaning is attached to the cheaper of 2 NT and the fourth suit. These calls are used to “Blackout” all minimum hands unsuitable for the non-forcing rebid. This arrangement allows the use of all other rebids as constructive and forcing.

The most common auctions for the convention are:

1. *Opener* *Responder*
 1 ♣ 1 ♥
 2 ♦

Here:

- 2 ♥ is natural showing a 6-card suit, or 5 cards to two top honors, and is non-forcing.
- 2 ♠ is the “Blackout” bid.
- 2 NT shows 9-12 points with spades stopped.
- 3 ♠ is the fourth suit forcing convention, asking for a spade stopper.
- Other bids are constructive and forcing.

2. *Opener* *Responder*
 1 ♣ 1 ♠
 2 ♦

Here:

- 2 ♥ is the “Blackout” or weakness bid which denies the ability to rebid 2 ♠.
- 2 ♠ is natural, non-forcing showing long spades.
- 2 NT shows 9-12 points with hearts stopped.
- 3 ♥ is the fourth suit forcing convention, asking for a heart stopper.
- Other bids are constructive and forcing.

3. *Opener* *Responder*
 1 ♣ 1 ♠
 2 ♥

Here:

- 2 ♠ is natural and weak.
- 2 NT is the “Blackout” bid.
- 3 ♦ is the fourth suit forcing convention.
- 3 NT shows 9-12 points with spades stopped. Stronger hands are shown via “Blackout” then 3 NT or 4 NT, as appropriate.
- Other bids are constructive and forcing.

4. *Opener* *Responder*
 1 ♦ 1 ♠
 2 ♥

Here:

- 2 ♠ is natural and weak.
- 2 NT is the “Blackout” bid.
- 3 ♣ is the fourth suit forcing convention.
- 3 NT shows 9-12 points with spades stopped. Stronger hands are shown via “Blackout.”
- Other bids are constructive and forcing.

Consider this West hand:

5. ♠ A 8 5 ♥ – ♦ A 9 7 6 ♣ A K 10 8 7 3

The auction thus far is:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| <i>West</i> | <i>East</i> |
| 1 ♣ | 1 ♥ |
| 2 ♦ | |

The 2 ♦ call is allowable, for although West does not have the values for game without a fit, he has the Blackout convention as a protection.

If East holds:

- a. ♠ J 7 3 2 ♥ Q 10 9 4 ♦ K 5 2 ♣ 6 5

he will make the Blackout bid of 2 ♠ and pass opener’s 3 ♣ bid.

- b. ♠ J 7 2 ♥ A 8 7 6 5 2 ♦ Q 9 3 ♣ 4

he will bid of 2 ♥ and pass opener’s rebid of 3 ♣.

- c. ♠ 9 6 4 ♥ Q 10 8 7 3 ♦ K 8 7 3 ♣ 5

he will make the Blackout bid of 2 ♠ and bid 3 ♦ over 3 ♣ to show his hand.

- d. ♠ 9 7 ♥ K 10 7 6 3 ♦ K J ♣ Q J 9 6

he will bid 3 ♣, which is constructive and forcing; and the full auction will be:

- 1 ♣ – 1 ♥; 2 ♦ – 3 ♣; 3 ♦ – 4 ♦; 4 ♠ – 5 ♣; 6 ♣ – P

The 3 \diamond call is a cue bid and 4 \diamond shows extra values without the \heartsuit A or \spadesuit A and promises the \diamond K.

e. \spadesuit K Q 4 \heartsuit K J 9 3 2 \diamond K Q 5 4 \clubsuit 7

he will bid 3 \diamond and the auction should proceed to a sound 6 \diamond contract via:

1 \clubsuit – 1 \heartsuit ; 2 \diamond – 3 \diamond ; 3 \heartsuit – 4 \heartsuit ; 4 \spadesuit – 5 \spadesuit ; 6 \diamond – Pass

Responder might, however, take a fling at 7 \diamond , but he should not, for opener had the option of bidding 5 NT or 6 \clubsuit .

Here are some further example auctions:

6.

West	East
\spadesuit A x	\spadesuit K x x x
\heartsuit K Q x x	\heartsuit x x
\diamond K x	\diamond A x x x
\clubsuit A Q J x x	\clubsuit K x x
1 \clubsuit	1 \spadesuit
2 \heartsuit	3 \clubsuit [constructive]
3 \spadesuit [cue-bid]	4 \diamond [cue-bid]
4 \heartsuit [cue-bid]	4 NT
5 \heartsuit [2 aces]	6 \clubsuit
Pass	

7.

West	East
\spadesuit A x	\spadesuit K x x x x
\heartsuit K Q x x	\heartsuit J x
\diamond K x	\diamond Q x x
\clubsuit A Q J x x	\clubsuit x x x
1 \clubsuit	1 \spadesuit
2 \heartsuit	2 NT [Blackout]
3 NT [IMPs, EW vul]	Pass

8.

West	East
\spadesuit x	\spadesuit K x x x x x
\heartsuit A K x x	\heartsuit J x
\diamond A x	\diamond Q x x x
\clubsuit A K x x x x	\clubsuit x
1 \clubsuit	1 \spadesuit
2 \heartsuit	2 \spadesuit [natural, weak]
3 \clubsuit [limited]	Pass

9.

West	East
\spadesuit A x x	\spadesuit K x x x x
\heartsuit A K x x	\heartsuit J x
\diamond x	\diamond Q x x x
\clubsuit A K Q x x	\clubsuit x x
1 \clubsuit	1 \spadesuit
2 \heartsuit	2 NT [Blackout]
3 \spadesuit [constructive]	4 \spadesuit

10.

West	East
\spadesuit K x	\spadesuit A Q x x x
\heartsuit A K x x	\heartsuit Q x
\diamond A x	\diamond K x x x
\clubsuit A K x x x	\clubsuit Q x
1 \clubsuit	1 \spadesuit
2 \heartsuit	2 NT [Blackout]
3 NT	6 NT

11.

West	East
\spadesuit A x x	\spadesuit K Q x x x x
\heartsuit A Q x x	\heartsuit x x
\diamond A Q J x x	\diamond x x
\clubsuit x	\clubsuit x x x
1 \diamond	1 \spadesuit
2 \heartsuit	2 \spadesuit [natural, weak]
4 \spadesuit	Pass

Other auctions where the convention might be put to use are:

1 \clubsuit – 1 \diamond ; 2 \heartsuit

1 \clubsuit – 1 \diamond ; 2 \spadesuit

1 \diamond – 1 \heartsuit ; 2 \spadesuit

Generally, these auctions will need to be considered separately. In fact it is probably best to use a simple rebid of his suit at the level of three by responder as constructive and to use Blackout on all weak hands.

The rebid of responder's suit became forcing soon after [the above] article was published.