

# CHECKBACK WITH MODERN STANDARD AMERICAN

## Showing shape and strength:-

To start the process we must abide by one all encompassing rule:-

With all balanced hands of 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2 and 5-3-3-2 we must open 1NT and 2NT with the appropriate strength or otherwise open 1 of a suit or a strong 2 with the intention of rebidding NT next time in order to complete the process of describing shape and strength. We must do this no matter which suit is our 5 card suit and no matter how little is in our doubleton.

If we open 1 of a suit and partner replies with a suit shift and we repeat our opened suit, we guarantee an unbalanced hand with at least 5 cards in the opened suit and less than 4 cards in any intervening suit. Bidding a second suit shows 5/4 shape, 4/4/4/1 shape or better.

The only time opener is not guaranteeing an unbalanced hand when opening one of a suit and making a second suit bid is when opener raises responder's suit. Showing a fit in responder's suit takes precedence over completing the description of a hand's shape.

By adhering to this principal you will find that you and your partner's bidding will be far more precise than ever before and that you will find games and slams which were previously unreachable and avoid games which against correct defence have little or no chance of success.

## What is checkback?:-

Like the Stayman Convention, check back is the use of an artificial bid of clubs to ask for more information about partner's balanced hand.

Stayman is used whenever partner opens 1NT or when partner opens 2NT

Check back comes into affect whenever two suits have been bid prior to a 1NT or 2NT rebid by opener. Now the bids of 2C and 3C respectively are artificial. They are checkback and are forcing opener to keep bidding and to complete the clarification of the hand's balanced shape:

## When should responder use checkback?:

When opener rebids 1NT and responder has 11+HCP and is unsure of the best final contract.

When opener rebids 2NT after a 2 over 1 and responder has 12+Pts and is unsure of the best final contract.

When opener jumps to 2NT, responder has 7+HCP and is unsure of the best final contract.

## Why use checkback over a 1NT rebid?:

Lets start with the most common opening hand in bridge the balanced hand of 12 to 14HCP which does not contain a 5 card major. Opener must start with 1 of the longest minor. With 3/3 in the minors I suggest opening 1C and with 4/4 in the minors open 1D.

Responder's most common reply to a 1 of a minor is 1 of a major. This they should do with all hands of 6 to 9/10HCP which has a 4 card major regardless of the shape of the remainder of the hand; with shapely 10+HCP when a major is their longest or equal longest suit; and with balanced hands of 11+HCP with a 4 card major (NT can be bid next if no major fit found)

Thus one of the most common hand bidding sequences in Standard is 1 of a minor - 1 of a major - 1NT. Whenever responder now has 11 or more HCP checkback can be used to discover the full shape and strength of opener's hand.

Let us examine a typical Standard bidding sequence of 1D - P - 1S - P -

Responder's options with 6-10HCP: Pass with a balanced hand containing no 5 card suit

Bid 2D with 4 spades and longer diamonds

Bid 2H with 5 spades and 4+ hearts

Bid 2S with 5 or more spades

Bid 3C,D,H and 3S with very shapely 8-10HCP\*

With 11-12HCP Bid 2NT with balanced hand with 4 spades

Bid 2C check back with all other hands

With 13+HCP: Bid 3NT with balanced 13-17HCP with 4 spades

Bid 2C check back with all other hands

\*These are pre-emptive/ mildly invitational sequences .

## How checkback works after a 1NT rebid (12-14HCP):

Responder's 2C requests opener to give the cheapest available extra information about shape and is unconditionally forcing to 2NT. Responder must not bid 2C with less than a good 10HCP

With a maximum of 14HCP opener must give the cheapest extra information to the 3 level.

With a minimum of 12-13HCP opener should bid at the 2 level.

