

Strong Two No Trump Opening

Recall that with very strong, balanced hands (23-24+) we open Two Clubs and then rebid Two No Trumps. With 18-19 points and a balanced hand we open One of a Suit and then *jump rebid* in No Trumps. This leaves a “gap” of 20-22 in our bidding agreements. What do we do if we hold 20-22 High Card Points and a Balanced hand? We open Two No Trumps.

Two No Trump Opening – 20-22 HCPs and a Balanced Hand

Recall the balanced hand shapes: 4333, 4432 and 5332. If we have a hand with those distributions and 20-22 High Card Points, we should open Two No Trumps. Even if we have a very good suit, a very weak suit or a five card major. Some example hands:

♠ Q94	♠ AKJ92	♠ KJ93	♠ 32
♥ AJT3	♥ QJ3	♥ KQ	♥ AKJT
♦ AK2	♦ AQJ	♦ AKQ92	♦ AKQ
♣ KQJ	♣ K4	♣ K2	♣ KT94
Open Two No Trumps	Open Two No Trumps	Open One Diamond	Open Two No Trumps

Our partner will have an excellent picture of our hand once we open Two No Trumps – they will know we have no more than one doubleton, no six card suit, at least two cards in every suit and a very tightly defined point count (20-22 HCPs). From there, responder will generally take charge of the auction and guide us to game when it is right or settle for the most likely best partscore if game is out of reach.

They may use stayman/transfers to enquire about our major holdings. Our role in subsequent bids is to answer questions.

Responding to a Two No Trump Opening Bid

As responder, you are very likely to know immediately if game is possible. With a bare four or five High Card Points, you should bid game. With ten or more you should be considering bidding slam! Only with zero to three HCPs should you consider bailing into a partscore contract. Once our partner has opened Two No Trumps, we can use all of the same bidding gadgets we do over One No Trumps:

Three Clubs is stayman (it shows a four card major and asks opener to show their four or five card major)
Three Diamonds is a transfer to Hearts (it shows five or more hearts)
Three Hearts is a transfer to Spades (it shows five or more spades)
Three No Trumps shows enough points for game (four or more!) and no four or five card major.

Consider the following hands and imagine our partner has opened Two No Trumps:

♠ AQ842	♠ 8742	♠ Q83	♠ 92
♥ 93	♥ QT4	♥ Q54	♥ T87432
♦ 865	♦ JT753	♦ 9864	♦ 654
♣ J82	♣ K	♣ J87	♣ T9
Bid 3H transfer to 3S Then bid 3NT	Bid 3C stayman then raise 3S to 4S or bid 3N	Bid 3NT	Bid 3D transfer to 3H Then pass!

Remember that once our partner opens Two No Trumps it is **our** responsibility as responder to find the correct game. Even though you will usually have a very bad hand – as long as you have four or more points, you *must* bid your partnership to game. Remember you will have the resources of *both* hands, not just yours.