

Convention of the Week

1st July, 2009

DONT

This is probably the most popular of the methods available when the opponents open 1NT. It's an acronym for "Disturb Opponents' No Trump", which describes it's purpose in a nutshell. The convention is less oriented towards constructive bidding, more about getting the opponents out of their cozy 1NT contract. It is normally used in both the direct and the balancing seat.

Initial Action

An opponent opens 1NT and now the DONT player has the following options:

Double	One-suited hand
2♣, 2♦, 2♥	Two-suited hand (the bid suit and a higher-ranking suit).
2♠	Spade one-suiter
2NT	Major-minor two-suiter, big hand.
3 of a suit	Natural, preemptive.
3NT	Major two-suiter (usually at least 6-5), big hand.

One-Suited Hands

In most defenses to 1NT, the Double shows a good hand. Not so when playing DONT, where the strong points-showing Double is sacrificed in order to provide extra ways to get into the auction. In DONT, Double shows a one-suited hand and Partner is expected to relay to 2♣, allowing Doubler to clarify his hand:

Pass	If the 2♣ relay is passed then Doubler has a Club one-suiter
2♦, 2♥, 2♠	Doubler is bidding his long suit

What happens next? Let's take a typical DONT auction of:

1NT	Dbl	Pass	2♣
Pass	2X	Pass	??

Here, "X" is a suit, now Partner can pass (the usual choice) or raise. The usual agreements are that raising a major is mildly invitational, and raising a minor is preemptive. And 2NT? Opposite a major one-suiter that is a stronger invitation than raising; opposite a minor one-suiter it is game-invitational.

Examples

1NT on your left, Partner doubles and you dutifully accept the relay by bidding 2♣. Partner now bids 2♥. What would you do with the following hands?

♠ 865, ♥ KQ76, ♦ Q2, ♣ 8763

Just pass. It's true that you have great Heart support, but 3♥ here would be invitational and this hand is not good enough. Of course, if the opponents later compete, you'll be happy to return the favor with a bid of 3♥.

♠ 98763, ♥ KQ76, ♦ 5, ♣ AT9

Not a bad hand and worth a mild game invitation with 3♥.

♠ 987, ♥ KQ76, ♦ 5, ♣ KQJ87

This one is worth the stronger invitation of 2NT. If you are tempted to jump to game with this hand then let's not forget that Partner is apt to jump into the auction at the drop of the hat (that's why he is playing DONT, so that he can get in there) and may not have much of a hand.

♠ 987, ♥ 8, ♦ QJT876, ♣ 765

This is a trick question, you should not have got yourself into this situation! When Partner doubled with his one-suiter, you no doubt had a strong suspicion that he had Hearts. More to the point, you have a suit of your own, and, rather than tamely accept the relay to 2♣, you can express a strong preference for playing in Diamonds, bidding 2♦ and by-passing the relay.

Spade One-Suiters

You may have noticed that there are two ways to show a Spade one-suiter:

1NT	Dbl	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♠		

1NT 2♠

The most common treatment is that the slow auction is stronger than the fast auction.

Two-Suited Hands

You hold: ♠ Q432, ♥ 72, ♦ K73, ♣ JT63
What do you do in the following situations?

1NT 2♣ Pass ??

Partner has shown Clubs and another suit. This one's easy, you just pass, you have found a home. Or you might try a preemptive raise to 3♣.

1NT 2♦ Pass ??

Partner has Diamonds and a major. It would be great if that other major were Spades but Murphy's Law (to say nothing of the laws of probability) say that Partner's major is probably Hearts, so the correct bid is Pass.

1NT 2♥ Pass ??

Partner has the majors, and you have an obvious 2♠ bid. Nothing difficult here, and although there is a good Spade fit this hand is a long, long way from any sort of game invitation.

Next, you hold: ♠ 7, ♥ KQJT9, ♦ 87654, ♣ 85

1NT 2♣ Pass ??

Partner has Clubs and another suit, and that suit is probably Spades. You could bid 2♦, praying that Partner's other suit is red, but that's a pipe-dream (where are all the Spades if Partner doesn't have them, and why have they not been bid?). So let's bid 2♥ here, saying "I don't care too much about your suits, my best guess is that we belong in Hearts" This bid would normally be a 6-card suit, but that holding looks adequate to us.

1NT 2♦ Pass ??

Partner has shown Diamonds and a major and 99.9% of the time that major will be Spades. Game seems highly unlikely, so here we would preempt with a raise to 3♦.

1NT 2♥ Pass ??

Partner has the majors and we suppose that we would invite game with 3♥. Playing DONT, Partner is apt to come in to the auction with all sorts of junk, we shouldn't expect too much. Even bidding just 3♥ runs the risk of getting the partnership too high. If you add the ♦A or ♣A to this hand then we would bid 2NT, which is a stronger game try than 3♥ directly.

Distribution Requirements

When making a DONT two-suited bid, how long should the suits be? This is very much a matter of partnership style. Few partnerships wait for a 5-5 hand before wheeling out their two-suiter, and when non-vulnerable many are apt to be content with even a 4-4 hand, all the more so if (a) non-vulnerable, or (b) in the balancing seat, or (c) sitting opposite an understanding Partner who can tolerate the occasional -1100.

When The Opponents Interfere

1NT 2♦ Dbl ??

Now, Pass says "I'm happy to play in Diamonds". Redouble says "Let's play in *your* major". And bidding 2♥ or 2♠ says "I want to play in *my* major".

1NT Dbl Rdbl ??

In this situation, a Pass allows Partner to bid his suit. If, instead of passing, we bid 2♣, this is not completing the relay, it is saying "I have a suit of my own and it is Clubs". Likewise, of course, if we bid 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠.

Defense to DONT

If your side opens 1NT and the opponents make a DONT Double or bid a DONT 2♣, it's customary to play "systems on". This means that transfers and Stayman are still on and that a Double of the DONT 2♣ is used as Stayman.

If the opponents overcall our 1NT with 2♦ or 2♠ then a sensible approach is to proceed as if their bids were one-suiters. So Doubles are either for penalty or else value-showing (let's say a game-invitational hand or better), that's a partnership preference (we suggest the latter).

Things are different when we open 1NT and they bid a DONT 2♥, showing the majors. Here's a suggestion:

Dbl is as above (value-showing)

2♠ shows something in Spades

2NT is Lebensohl

3♣ or 3♦ is natural, invitational

3♥ or 3♠ is shortness and game-forcing

3NT is to play (no major stops)