

1.6

WEAK OPENING AT LEVEL 2

(25-07-06)

INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF "WEAK HAND"

You evaluate your hand after a new deal of cards, your opponents have not yet bid or have only declared *Pass*. Alas! Your hand evaluation, including the Complement, shows that you do not hold 13 HL, nor 12 HL with a Specified suit at least fifth!

There is still a possibility of opening to compete in the auction. Does this make sense?

Yes, but on one condition. A bid that is too low for an opening or an Opening Overbid must be a precise and complete description that does not require a redeclaration to be understood and interpreted.

If you remember this basic principle regarding weak hands of all kinds, you will be able to easily understand and integrate their requirements and usefulness. In other words, this type of bidding should never be used as a bluff to raise the stakes in the hope of disrupting your opponents' communications or to overdeclare them so that they fail.

Of course, such bids have an obstructive effect. However, using them as a defensive tactic is much less effective than one might think.

In conclusion, bids based on weak hand possession serve first and foremost to provide a quick and accurate description of one's hand in order to arrive at the best possible contract; this includes games and slams that may be found in the team's combination play. Any other objective is doomed to failure and discouragement, especially for the teammate.

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The convention

This convention is called: **WEAK OPENING AT THE LEVEL 2** more simply, **2 Weak**. This term includes the Level 2 Jump Opening Overbid. The term "*Barrage*" is synonymous and encompasses both types of 2 Weak.

This opening requires a **bidding context**, namely that of the Level 2 Opening. We must therefore abandon the use of the Standard rule, which reserves this context to specifically describe Strong Hands in trump (22 HL and above). It has become almost standard practice to use, for Majors, Level 2 in the First Bid to bid the Level 2 Weak Opening.

Indeed, it is necessary to restrict the Level 2 Weak Opening to Majors in order to bid Strong Hands (See Topic 1.12 in this Chapter) via the High 2 Clubs convention.

The same goes for the 2-Diamond jump bid, which corresponds to a specific convention such as the First Bid. This context should therefore be reserved for the 2-Diamond Flannery convention (See Topic 1.15).

This weak opening convention should therefore only be used for Major suits. Furthermore, it is also possible to use this convention after an opponent's opening. This is referred to as a *weak opening overbid at level 2*, provided that this opening overbid is obviously declared as a jump bid.

To avoid redundancy, the weak opening at level 2 can simply be called a **weak 2**, or even a level 2 pre-bid.

The ability to bid a weak hand, regardless of its level, complements the armament for playing bridge; but it should never be considered a tactical weapon to systematically enter the auction, to open or defend, when the score is below 13 HL.

Here are some common contexts for a barrage at the level 2.

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Ex. 1.6:1 These are all **weak openings** at level 2.

	1	2	3	4
a)	2 He
b)	Pass	2 He
c)	Pass	Pass	2 He	...
d)	1 Di	2 He
e)	1 Di	Pass	1 He	2 Pi

In the first two situations, it is strongly recommended to have a particularly good hand, since partner has not yet bid.

Because of this, it is necessary to set strict requirements for a weak opening, otherwise the risk of getting bogged down with this type of bid becomes too high.

On the other three situations, however, either the partner who passed or the opponent opened the bidding first. Consequently, this mathematically implies that the opposing team must hold more than half the points. We can therefore be assured that the risk of wasting partner's hand is significantly reduced if the other player announces a weak hand.

This certainty "allows" us to slightly lower the requirements for announcing a weak opening while maintaining a profitable level of performance.

Let's begin by defining the first category of weak openings at level 2, namely those whose requirements are said to be strict.

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PRINCIPLE 1.6:1 CONTEXT FOR A STRICT WEAK OPENING

A **STRICT** context exists for a Weak Opening at level 2 or higher if:

- Partner has made no declaration (including *Pass*), and
- The opponent has **NOT** opened the bidding.

N.B. *This also applies to "Weak Openings" at levels 3 and 4.*

When these two conditions are present **simultaneously** before declaring a Weak Opening, the player must meet exactly the following requirements.

PRINCIPLE 1.6:2 REQUIREMENTS FOR A STRICT WEAK OPENING

A Weak Opening in a strict context asserts possession of:

- a Specified suit (or equivalent) in Spades or Hearts,
 - 6 cards for level 2;
 - 7 cards for level 3;
 - 8 cards for level 4;
- between 8 and 12 Honor-Length (HL) points and never more than 9 Honor points; with 10 PH, you must *open or overbid an opening without jumping*,
- and a *primarily offensive* hand, which is defined by:
 - possession of at least 6 PH, which must be non-losing, and
 - the presence of a singleton or a chicane,
 - the absence of an Ace, except for the trump suit,
 - the absence of a 4-card suit in the other Major suit.

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It is important to respect the criteria for a STRICTLY OFFENSIVE hand when the context requires it, because any weak opening in a strict context will mean that the hand is of **no defensive value**.

The purpose of strict requirements is to give partner the opportunity to bid in the event that they hold a potentially valuable hand, in which case, holding an Ace would be a very useful hand for making a game or slam contract. Similarly, holding a fourth suit in the other Major would be useful in the event that partner holds cards in that Major suit with a suitable score to open the bidding.

Thus, strict requirements are necessary in a strict context to prevent the team from missing out on game contracts or a slam. And, when they are met, the player bidding a **weak 2** can rest assured that their chances of success are maximized while avoiding the loss of a potentially higher-rewarding contract.

PRINCIPLE 1.6:3 CONTEXT FOR A NON-STRICT WEAK OPENING

There is a non-strict context for a Weak Opening at level 2 or higher:

- if partner has declared *Pass*,
- or
- if the opponent has opened the bidding.

N.B. Only one of these two conditions is necessary, even if both conditions are possible simultaneously.

This also applies to "Weak Openings" at levels 3 and 4.

Remember, if the opponents have opened the bidding, there must be **evidence** of a bidding jump to distinguish between the announcement of a *weak hand* and that of a Standard hand, which would be announced by an Opening Overbid without a jump, up to game level.

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IMP. If a jump bid at level 2 is not possible, then we must *Pass* to the first round of bidding with a *weak hand* unless the hand contains exactly 12 HL points.

PRINCIPLE 1.6:4 REQUIREMENTS FOR A NON-STRICT WEAK OPENING

A non-strict Weak Opening at level 2 asserts possession of:

- **a Specified suit (or equivalent) in Spades or Hearts,**
 - 6 cards for level 2;
 - 7 cards for level 3;
 - 8 cards for level 4;
- **between 8 and 12 Honor-Length (HL) points and never more than 9 Honor points; with 10 HP, you must open or overbid an opening without jumping,**
- **and an offensive hand, which is defined by the possession of:**
 - at least 6 HP, which must be non-losing,
 - a singleton or a chicane (rarely two doubletons).

Corollary:

The presence of an Ace or a fourth Major straight is acceptable if the suit meets the required criteria. However, if the score equals or exceeds 13 HP, you must open or raise the standard opening.

Let's first compare two hands that seem to meet the strict requirements for a Level 2 Weak Opening, one of which, however, lacks the necessary strength.

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Ex. 1.6:2

a)	5	b)	5 2
	K Q 10 9 7 2		K Q 7 5 3 2
	9 2		Q 2
	K 9 6 2		J 9 2

Comments:

- a)** There are 8 PH with no losing points and 2 PL, a Specified 6-card suit, a singleton, and "no 4 cards" in a Major suit, nor an Ace outside of trump. This is a true hand for *a weak opening at level 2*, whether strictly or not.
- b)** There are still 8 PH and 2 PL, but there are 3 losing points, leaving 5 non-losing PH. It is preferable to have 6 non-losing PH for a weak opening; when in doubt, take the time to consider the quality of the trump suit. Holding one or two intermediate cards (10, 9 with 8) is highly desirable to improve the performance of a *weak 2* opening when the non-losing score is at its lowest. Furthermore, two doubletons are often less effective, if not more dangerous, than a singleton. It is generally not advisable to make such openings with a similar hand.

Let's look at two hands that do not meet the requirements for a *strict level 2 weak opening* due to a high-limit score.

Ex. 1.6:3

a)	8	b)	8
	K Q 10 8 7 2		J 10 9 7 5 2
	Q 10 8 5		K J 8
	K 9		K Q

Comments:

- a)** There are 10 PH and 2 PL. In opening position, this hand should be bid *1 Heart* and not *2 Hearts* because it is too rich to be considered a weak hand.

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- b) There are still 10 PH, including 3 losing points and 2 PL, and a sixth suit without any GH. At least a Specified fifth suit or its Equivalence would be required to open the bidding at level 1 or to make a Standard Opening overbid if the opponents open first. This hand appears offensive, but in fact its potential is mixed; therefore, this type of suit is unsuitable for a weak opening at any level.

Here are two other examples of hands suitable for a *strict Level 2 Weak Opening* that will introduce you to the next topic and reassure you about the relevance of the specific rules concerning "Weak Openings."

Ex. 1.6:4

a)	8	b)	8
	K Q 10 8 7 2		K 10 9 8 7 4 2
	J 9 8		Q 7 4 2
	K 9 5		7

Comments:

- a) There are 8 PL and 2 PL. The hand meets the strict requirements and can be used as a *weak opening bid at level 2* or as a jump opening overbid at level 2.

However, if the opponents open with *1 Spade*, this hand cannot be bid with *2 Hearts* because there will be no evidence of a jump bid to indicate that it is a weak hand. With 11 points in total, this type of hand should not be used for a defense by a jump opening overbid without a jump. However, by *Passing* in the first round after the opponents open the bidding with *1 Spade*, this hand can certainly be clearly described in the second round by the *2 Hearts* opening overbid (the teammate having obviously Passed). A second-round opening Overbid promises a hand of 10 to 11 points that is primarily offensive, thus guaranteeing possession of a specified five-card suit at level 2 and 6 cards at level 3 (*this is the next theme*).

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- b)** There are 5 non-losing PH, 3 PL, and 2 singletons. The Heart suit is a Specified sixth-equivalent suit, either an Ace or a King with a low honor and an additional trump card. This hand meets at least the requirements for a strict 2-weak opening, i.e., **2 Hearts**.

Note that the sixth-equivalent suit contains a slight surplus, a second low honor, which compensates for the absence of the missing PH (normally, 6 non-losing PHs are required). It is this surplus in the trump suit with the 5 non-losing PHs, and not the two singletons, that makes this hand valid for a strict Weak Opening or a jump opening overbid.

Furthermore, this hand presents a notable difference from hand **a)**, which also meets the requirements of a strict Weak Opening. Indeed, in a context of obstruction by an early opening by the opponents to *1 Spade*, the hand in **b)** cannot justify a second-round opening overbid because the non-losing score is less than 10 points. Such a hand should therefore potentially be disqualified for two rounds in such a situation.

SECTION PRATIQUE 1.6

Ex. 1.6:5 You are in opening position, what do you declare with each of the following hands?

	1	2	3	4	
	Pass	You			
a)	5 K Q 10 9 7 2 9 2 A 6 5 2	b)	K K 10 9 7 5 3 2 Q 2 J 6 2	c)	9 8 A Q 10 9 8 6 10 K J 4 2
d)	5 J 2 K Q 9 8 7 3 K 6 5 2	e)	8 K 10 9 8 5 3 2 9 8 K 6 2	f)	J 10 7 4 A Q 10 9 8 6 --- 10 4 2

Answers:

- a) **Pass:** Your hand does indeed have a Specified sixth suit and 9 non-losing HPs, but there is an Ace outside the trump suit. Your partner has not yet been able to bid; it would be both disrespectful and highly inappropriate to bid quickly, as partner could hold a very interesting hand.
- b) **1 Heart:** There are 12 points in total, 9 HP + 3 LP, and an equivalent sixth suit and fewer than 6 non-losing HPs. This hand is suitable for opening the bidding. In a strict context, preference should be given to the Standard Opening. However, in a non-strict context, this hand could be suitable for a *weak opening at level 2* if there is a bidding jump. Otherwise, this hand correctly meets the requirements for an opening overbid at level 1, 2, or 3 without a jump.

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- c) **1 Heart:** This hand has a very nice Heart suit and 12 points. It qualifies for a Standard Opening and is **too good** for a *strict 2-point Weak Opening*. Any Weak Opening should be avoided in a strict context when there are **10 PH**, as this underestimates the true score.

- d) **Pass:** There are 9 PH and 1 PL. It would be possible to bid this hand with the *2 Diamonds* bid, but this context is reserved for the *2 Diamonds Flannery convention* in the system taught. This hand cannot qualify for a Standard Opening because it does not have 12 points despite its fifth suit with 2 GH. You will learn in the next Topic that it is possible to specifically bid hands of 10-11 points with a specified suit at least fifth.

- e) **2 Hearts:** This hand has an Equivalent sixth suit containing two low honors, the 10 and the 9 with the 8, as well as a non-losing King of Clubs for a total of 6 non-losing PH. This hand is perfectly suitable for a *weak opening*, but only at level 2 because it is a specified Equivalent sixth suit despite its seven cards.

- f) **Pass!** This hand cannot be used for a *weak opening at level 2*; it does not meet the strict requirements for such a declaration. In this case, there is a fourth suit in the other Major. You must be patient and listen to your partner, as well as your opponents. This hand will be very well described in the second round after a pass.

Ex. 1.6:6 **What do you declare with each of the hands in the previous example if you are in a defensive situation?**

1	2	3	4
Pass	1 Cl	You	

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Answers:

- a) **2 Hearts:** 9 PH + 2 PL and a Specified sixth suit with an offensive hand. In a defensive bidding situation, the requirements are less strict; an Ace outside of trump is therefore permitted, but the hand must remain offensive. Note that there is an obvious jump from the last bid; this type of bid is also called a Jump Opening Overbid, which is equivalent to a WEAK OPENING AT NON-STRICT LEVEL 2.

- b) **2 Hearts:** 9 PH + 3 PL, including 3 non-losing points; the suit is an Equivalent sixth suit and the context is non-strict given the opponent's opening. Therefore, despite the 12 PH and the Specified suit, it is preferable to bid a *weak 2* because it describes a hand with offensive potential. But **1 Heart** would not be a serious mistake.

- c) **1 Heart:** Here, the 12 HL and the Specified sixth suit should preferably be described by a non-jump opening overbid for logical reasons. Indeed, this describes a mixed potential (likely cards in the opponent's suit), and therefore can be effective in contract defense. Whereas any weak opening describes a "purely" offensive hand, and therefore a likely "short" one in the opponent's suit. This is not an absolute rule but rather a pragmatic observation.

- d) **Pass:** 9 PH + 2 PL, the 2 Diamonds jump bid would be logical, but it is prohibited in the overall system taught because this context is reserved for the conventional Flannery opening. If this hand contained an extra point, it would then have been permissible to make an opening *overbid at level 1*; for now, it is necessary to *Pass* and await the continuation of the bidding.

- e) **2 Hearts:** A hand that meets the requirements for a *strict weak 2* is necessarily adequate for a non-strict weak 2 when the opponents open the bidding. Of course, there must be a jump bid after the opponent's opening. In the absence of obvious jumps, 12 HL with a Specified suit at least fifth is required, otherwise 13 HL is required to announce an opening overbid without a jump to level 2, otherwise *Pass*

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- f) **2 Hearts:** 7 PH with only 1 loser + 2 PL and a Specified sixth suit. This hand is very offensive and, even though partner has not yet passed, the context is that of a weak 2-suit, not strict, because there has been an opening by the opponents. This nuance is important and stems from the fact that it is now less likely that partner could hold a high-quality hand. Thus, the presence of a fourth suit in the other major or the presence of an Ace outside the trump suit is acceptable and does not prevent this jump opening overbid.

Ex. 1.6:7 **Should you make a weak opening to level 2 with the following hands if you are in opening position?**

	1	2	3	4
	Pass	Pass	You	
a)	5 K Q 10 9 7 2 9 2 A 6 5 2		b)	K J 4 2 A Q 10 9 8 6 --- 9 8 4

Answers:

- a) **Yes:** This hand cannot open the bidding in a Standard manner because there are only 11 HL points (9 PH + 2 PL). However, this hand can be described by a **non-strict Level 2 Weak Opening** because there is an Ace outside the trump suit. This description is permissible because partner has passed, which constitutes a non-strict context.
- b) **Yes:** The non-strict context also allows for the possession of a fourth suit in the other major. This hand has 12 HL points, including 10 PH, and should preferably be used to open the bidding in a Standard manner, i.e., by declaring *1 Heart*. However, given that partner has passed, it is preferable to make a **Weak Opening** because the risk of losing a game contract is lower, and this type of declaration specifically describes a hand with offensive potential.

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Ex. 1.6:8 **Should you make a Weak Opening with the following hands if you are in fourth position?**

	1	2	3	4
	Pass	Pass	1 Pi	You
a)	5 K Q 10 9 7 2 9 2 A 6 5 2		b)	K J 4 2 A Q 10 9 8 6 10 9 8

Answers:

- a)** **No:** There is indeed a non-strict context for a Weak Opening, but it is not possible to bid at level 2 with a jump. There are 9 PH + 2 PL, 1 point is missing for an Opening overbid without a jump at level 2, and you must ***Pass*** because the suit is not long enough to bid an opening overbid with a jump (or pre-jump) at level 3. You will learn in Topic 1.9 that a Specified seventh suit, or Equivalent, is absolutely required.
- b)** **No:** This time again, it is impossible to make a jump at level 2, and the suit is not long enough to bid at level 3. However, you should not Pass because the 12 HL points allow you to declare a "simple" opening overbid at level 2 without a jump; therefore, you must declare **2 Hearts**.
