

Twos and Transfers

Chapter 2: Basic Weak Twos

Most people agree to play weak twos as “6-10 high card points and a six card suit”. That is a reasonable ‘ball park’ definition, but I would suggest that it be modified to allow for different situations, these being the vulnerability conditions. Too few people make use of the vulnerability and just bid their hands without paying any attention to whether they are vulnerable or not, nor whether the opponents are. A huge advantage can be gained by any pair that is able to use vulnerability conditions when making their bidding decisions.

I suggest the following parameters for weak twos as they relate to the vulnerability:

Not Vulnerable vs Vulnerable: 3-5 HCP

Neither Vulnerable: 5-7 HCP

Both Vulnerable: 7-9 HCP

Vulnerable vs Not Vulnerable: 9-11 HCP

There is very good logic behind the setting of these parameters, but you do not need to adhere strictly to them, especially in a match point session. They will, however, make your and your partner’s bidding much more accurate in all circumstances, whether they involve bidding to the final contract without opposition, or bidding in competition against opponents who also want to bid their own cards. Not only that, adhering to these point counts will instil discipline as well as improve your ability to calculate and assess the potential of your cards. This point count range can also be used in JUMP OVERCALLS when opponents open the bidding. And the good thing is that the range is easy to remember by simply referring to it as “3,5,7,9”.

Let’s take a look at some hands that you would open with a ‘standard’ weak two.

♠ KJ9764

♥ 876

♦ J5

♣ 82

If you are not vulnerable vs vulnerable. Open 2S. You might also choose to call it “5-7” and open 2S neither vul, or even upgrade it to “7-9” if both vulnerable, but you would not open it at all if vulnerable against not.

♠ K4

♥ AQJ972

♦ J52

♣ 8

Most people would open this hand 1H. That is what you would also do UNLESS you were vulnerable against not. The point count is ideal for a 2H opening.

The very broad range (6-10 HCP) for the normal weak twos, as you may have been taught, is really too broad, even if you have the 2NT inquiry as to strength available.

Most people do use 2NT to ask for further description of the strength and quality of the opened weak two, or for extra features, but isn't a more accurate description to start with much better? And another advantage of the more restricted point count that I have suggested is this: most people play that any bid by partner in their own suit is FORCING. Often, when you open a weak two, partner will want to find out a bit more than just your strength in your suit, and want to know if you have any support for them, hence the need to be able to bid their suit as forcing. That is normal, but with the point structure as I have outlined, sufficient is known for you to be able to bid your own suit as NON forcing, IF you agree that with your partner, and still use 2NT as a specific inquiry for further information, but this MUST be agreed with partner.

Let's take a look at another weak two

♠ 432

♥ 743

♦ AQJ974

♣ 2

According to my guidelines, this is a 2D opening at EQUAL vulnerability, but not at favourable. The hand is too good for "3-5". However if you use your imagination, you might decide to open this hand 3D at favourable vulnerability.

The hand is not good enough to open 2D if vulnerable vs not. Pass and hope you can be of use to partner later.

If you are going to play what could be called 'standard' weak twos, make sure you discuss the point range with partner and also whether a bid in another suit by partner is forcing, and what the responses to a 2NT inquiry will be. That should not be too difficult for even a new partnership. And if you do agree to play weak twos with an unfamiliar partner, there is nothing to stop you from using the 'disciplined' range yourself even within the agreed "6-10".

We used to play a range of "0 to 9" when we played the weak twos, but within that was an implicit understanding that both ends of the range were only going to be used in extreme circumstances, as dictated by a number of factors, the most important being the vulnerability. Common sense should always be a deciding factor in bidding, especially with weak hands.