

Benjamin Twos

Benjamin Twos bids were invented by Albert Benjamin from Scotland. They use both 2♣ and 2♦ as strong artificial bids and 2♥/♠ are weak. There are a few variations of exactly what the 2♣/♦ bids mean and I give my preferred version.

Now I am one of those guys who like to have their cake and eat it (perhaps explains my weight?). I certainly like to be able to open a weak two in the majors, but I also like strong Acol type twos in the majors. Fortunately, this was all solved by Albert Benjamin. Playing Benjamin twos, the traditional 2♣ opening (23+ or a game forcing hand) is replaced by 2♦. This then leaves 2♣ free to show a strong two in either major (partner normally relays with 2♦ and you then bid 2♥/♠). Now there are numerous variants as to exactly what the 2♣ and 2♦ opening bids (and subsequent rebids) mean. I shall simply describe my preferred Benjamin variation etc.

- 2♣ Strong but not game forcing. Either 8-9 playing tricks in an unspecified suit or a balanced 23-24.
- 2♦ Game forcing, 25+ if balanced.
- 2♥/♠ weak, 6 card suit, 6-10.
- 2NT 20-22 balanced.
- 3NT pre-emptive (gambling 3NT); long solid minor, nothing outside.

After a 2♣/♦ opening, I prefer an automatic relay of 2♦/♥. Rebids then mean: -

- 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥/♠ 8 playing tricks – non-forcing
- 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥/♠ 9 playing tricks – non-forcing (but rarely passed)
- 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣/♦ 9 playing tricks – non-forcing (generally an unbalanced hand)
- 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT 23-24, balanced – non-forcing
- 2♦ - 2♥ - 2NT 25+, balanced, game forcing
- 2♦ - 2♥ - any suit natural, game forcing

As I said, there are numerous variants of Benjamin twos, but I prefer this one because you never have to bid 3NT (this leaves partner the option of Stayman and transfers etc. when he is bust and you are 25+). There is a rather better/more complex variant based on this scheme which also includes 4441 type hands.

Note that a 2♦ opening is always game forcing.

Note also that an Acol two is normally forcing. Playing this version of Benjamin the sequence 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥/♠ is not forcing (but is rarely passed) as a stronger opening hand would rebid at the 3 level.

If the bidding starts 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥/♠ then this is not strictly forcing, but responder needs very little to make a bid. I covered this in detail in news-sheet 72: - A Benjamin 2♥/♠ after 2♣ is strong and virtually forcing – only pass with a real heap. Responder to a Benjamin (or strong) two should take a very optimistic view of any assets that he has and bid with a reasonable expectation of making a trick.

See also the '**Playing Tricks**' link.

Incidentally, Benjamin twos are normally associated with Acol – but there really is no dependence. You can play any variation of Benjamin twos with Standard American, 2/1 or any natural system.

No weak 2♦?

And just one more point. I like to play an automatic relay of 2♦ over partner's 2♣ opening – to find out what type of hand he has.

- ♠ 95
 - ♥ 95
 - ♦ KQJ1098
 - ♣ 765
- But consider this hand – a superb hand for the weak 2♦, wouldn't it be a shame to have to pass it! One solution is to play that you open 2♣ with a weak 2♦ hand and then pass partner's 2♦ response.
- This works fine, except that responder cannot respond the 'automatic' 2♦ if he has a hand that can make game opposite a weak two in ♦'s.