

The 2♦ Opening.

There are numerous common meanings for a 2♦ opening. What is the best use for this bid? I shall cover the most common meanings and give reasons for my preferred choice.

- 1- The weak 2♦
- 2- The strong 2♦
- 3- Flannery 2♦
- 4- The Multi 2♦
- 5- Roman 2♦
- 6- Benjamin Twos

-1- The weak 2♦

This is a 6 card suit and usually 6-10 points. The weak 2♦ is the most popular choice in USA for those who do not play Flannery. Nothing wrong with having a weak 2♦ opener, but does it really have much of a pre-emptive effect? I believe that there is a much better use for the bid.

♠ 1082 This is a fine 2♦ opener. It's one point shy of the minimum but the solidity of
♥ Q3 the ♦ suit is easily enough compensation.
♦ QJ10876
♣ 32

♠ K102 This hand, however, is a little too good and I would open 1♦ or else pass.
♥ 93 In 3rd seat 2♦ would be acceptable as it's opposite a passed partner.
♦ KJ10876
♣ A2

♠ 104 This hand is an example from the club – it's owner opened 2♦.
♥ Q5 This is a poor bid with 7 ♦'s and a 3♦ opener is correct (pre-empt to the limit).
♦ KJ109874
♣ 103

-2- The strong 2♦

As used in classic Acol. There is no strict point range, but generally 15+. The important thing is that it must be a good suit (at *least* 5 card – normally 6+) and the hand must contain 8+ playing tricks (playing tricks are defined in the pages on hand evaluation).

♠ A6 This hand would qualify for a strong 2♦ opener. It is 8½ - 9 playing
♥ AK6 tricks. Nothing wrong with this system, but as we see later, I have a better
♦ AKJ763 use for the 2♦ opening and this hand can simply be opened with 1♦ (2NT
♣ 32 would be a little too off-beat).

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Flannery 2♦

- ♠ AJ76
 - ♥ AK962
 - ♦ J7
 - ♣ 32
- Popular in the States. 11-15 points and specifically 4-5 in the majors. For some reason, some Americans seem to find this hand shape difficult. I simply don't see the problem, open 1♥ and partner will bid 1♠ if there is a fit there. Agreed, a 2♦ opening is very specific and enables responder to enquire about your minor suit distribution, but this really is a waste of an otherwise very useful opening bid; read on.

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The Multi 2♦

Popular in Europe, not so popular in the States. There are a multitude of variants of the multi! Basically, a 2♦ opening is artificial and can mean one of (usually) three things from:

- A weak two in a major.
- A strong two in a minor.
- A strong (20+) balanced NT hand.
- A strong 4441 (any order) distribution hand.
- A strong two in a major.
- possibly some other variant.

The multi certainly is a formidable weapon. However, its use against less experienced opponents is perhaps suspect. It has been banned at some levels by some Bridge unions. Their reasoning is that a bid at the two level should be either totally weak or totally strong. Inexperienced opponents cannot cope with a mixture. I totally agree (in a competition with weaker opposition).

Another quite popular treatment for an opening 2♦ is to show a 3-suited hand. The 4441 type (any order) hand is notoriously difficult to cope with in any natural type bidding system. The Roman 2♦ helps towards solving the problem, but it is only able to do so for the point range that you choose. Anyway, typically, any 4441 type or 0445 or 0454 within your allocated point range are permissible (so not a 5-card major).

And the point range? You can play what you like and I discuss the best range for your system later. Playing Mini Roman it is about 12-15.

There are various schemes for the responses to 2♦. One typical scheme is: -

- 2♥ = Pass (or correct to 2♠).
- 2♠ = Pass (or correct to 3♣).
- 2NT = Shortage ask. Opener then bids the suit below the shortage (3♠ with ♣ shortage). Responder can then sign off in any of opener's suits or bid on. With a strong hand responder now bids the shortage suit and things take off.
- 3♣ = Pass (or correct to 3♦)
- 3♦ = An invitational (limit) raise for either major. Opener should respond 3♥/♠ with a minimum or 4♥/♠ with a maximum. Of course responder may use this bid when he has slam interest, simply to find out how good partner's hand is (and what his shape is). This is a similar ruse to using a help-suit game try as a slam try.
- 3♥ = Natural (6 card suit). Obviously opener raises to game if ♥'s is one of his suits.
- 3♠ = Natural (6 card suit). Obviously opener raises to game if ♠'s is one of his suits.
- 3NT = To play.
- 4♣ = Ace asking.
- 4♦ = To play in 4♥ or 4♠.

Which Range?

Hand 1	Hand 2	So what point range is best for your Roman 2♦ system?
♠ 4	♠ 4	Consider these two hands. Suppose that you play a strong NT system, then you open Hand 1 with 1♣ (or 1♦ or even 1♥ if you are that way inclined) and partner responds 1♠, what is your rebid? Whatever you opened, the only realistic rebid is 1NT, fine. But Hand 2 is a problem; you cannot rebid 1NT as that would show 12-14 points.
♥ KQ87	♥ AK87	
♦ AJ54	♦ AJ54	
♣ K743	♣ KJ43	

If you play a weak NT then you have the same problem but the other way round. You open whatever your system dictates and with Hand 2 you rebid 1NT (15-16) over a 1♠ response. But here it's hand 1 that is the problem.

Basically, these 4441 type hands (especially with short ♠'s) are difficult to bid if you open one of a suit and partner responds in your singleton if you cannot rebid 1NT.

So it's best to have your Roman 2♦ bid to be the same range as your opening 1NT.

So I have covered five popular uses of the 2♦ opening bid. Now it's time to get onto my preferred 2♦ opening (it is always artificial and strong): -

Benjamin Twos

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.

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.