

The 2NT response in Basic Standard American or Acol systems shows 11-12 points and is a bid which is rarely used. Even if you do use it you can always find another way to bid the hand.

But 2NT can be used to good effect to show a much stronger hand. In the States, Jacoby 2NT is widely used over a 1♥/♠ opening but in the UK Baron 2NT is fairly popular and is used over any one level suit opening.

It is well known that if both opener and responder have flat hands, then a slam is unlikely even with 32 HCPs between the hands unless you find a fit.

This is where the 2NT response comes into its own in a convention called The Baron 2NT. It enables 4-4 fits to be found (often in the minors) for slam purposes.

If partner opens with one of a suit, and you have 15-17 points and a hand with no 5-card suit, you should bid 2NT. If your hand contains a 5-card suit you should bid naturally or jump shift if it's a good quality suit. Some players do play that Baron 2NT is unlimited (so can be more than 17) in strength, and if very strong then responder has to ensure that he never makes a game bid that opener may pass.

Opener's rebid, now that you are in a game-forcing situation (Baron 2NT is game forcing and slam seeking), just shows other four card suits in ascending order. A 'reverse' bid does not show extra values as it would opposite a one level response.

Example 1

West	East	West	East
♠ 76	♠ AQ32	1♣ (1)	2NT (2)
♥ Q1076	♥ AJ3	3♥ (3)	3♠ (4)
♦ K96	♦ Q873	3NT (5)	pass
♣ AK107	♣ Q54		

- (1) Playing a strong NT and 5 card majors.
- (2) Baron 2NT.
- (3) 4♥'s. This does not promise reversing values/shape and denies 4♦'s.
- (4) 4♠'s
- (5) To play. Note that Opener is the captain in Baron sequences as responder has defined his hand.

Example 2

West	East	West	East
♠ 76	♠ A2	1♣ (1)	2NT (2)
♥ Q1076	♥ KJ32	3♥ (3)	4♥ (4)
♦ K96	♦ AQ87	pass (5)	
♣ AK107	♣ Q54		

- (1) Playing a strong NT.
- (2) Baron 2NT.
- (3) 4♥'s. This does not promise reversing values.
- (4) 4♥'s. Responder should not bid above game as opener is the captain. However, if you play that Baron 2NT may be more than 17 points then responder would have to leap into slam mode here.

If opener has a good hand then he can ask for Aces/keycards (having established where the fit is) to see if a slam is there: -

Example 3

West	East	West	East
♠ J	♠ AQ4	1♥	2NT (1)
♥ AQ1072	♥ J3	3♦ (2)	4♦ (3)
♦ K962	♦ AQ87	4NT (4)	5♠ (5)
♣ KJ10	♣ Q542	6♦	pass

- (1) Baron 2NT.
- (2) 4♦'s.
- (3) 4♦'s.
- (4) RKCB for ♦'s.
- (5) 2 key cards + ♦Q.

Baron 2NT is an interesting, established, idea. But I much prefer to play Jacoby 2NT over major suit openings. Note that the 6♦ slam of example 3 should also be easily reached after the natural sequence 1♥ - 2♣ - 2♦ ...

But over a 1♣/♦ opening I suppose that you could play Baron 2NT; but again I think that slams should be reached with natural methods, especially if you play Inverted Minors.

I don't particularly like Baron 2NT, but over a 2NT opening (or 2NT via 2♣/♦ whatever) there is a lot to be said for playing Baron 3♣ in preference to using 3♣ as Stayman.