

# BENNETT

This convention is used when the opponents open with 1NT -- any high card point range; 12-14 or 15-18.

It is only used by a passed hand and in the balancing seat. There are two auctions where it comes into play:--

- (1) Pass - 1NT - Pass - Pass; (?) -- Bennett applies.
- (2) Pass - Pass - Pass - 1NT; Pass - Pass - (?) -- Bennett is "on" if you chose to balance.

The key to bidding successfully against a NT opener as a passed hand is to have a singleton or void.

Here are the Bennett bids:--

Pass - 1NT - Pass - Pass

Double = take out without spades

2C = take out without hearts

2D = the majors

2M = that major + a minor (usually a five card minor).

That is all there is to this method.

It is simple and a very powerful way to get into the bidding.

Palo Alto Unit Fall Lecture Series

September 20, 2011

**North**

♠ 10 x x x  
♥ K x x  
♦ J x x x  
♣ x x

**West**

♠ K x  
♥ J 9 8 x x  
♦ Q x  
♣ A 10 x x

**East (D)**

♠ Q J x x  
♥ x  
♦ K 9 x  
♣ Q J x x x

**South**

♠ A 9 x  
♥ A Q 10 x  
♦ A 10 8 x  
♣ K x

**Hand 1:** Both sides are vulnerable. The bidding:

**North**

Pass  
Pass

**East**

Pass  
2C \*

**South**

1NT (15-17)  
Pass

**West**

Pass  
Pass

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**Notes:**

After East's initial PASS; the 2C (\*) bid is Bennett -- shows a "take-out" hand but "partner do not bid hearts." This hand makes three clubs.

If West had no method to get into the bidding, East would lead a heart and 1NT would probably make.

**North**  
 ♠ K 8 7 x  
 ♥ J x  
 ♦ x x x x  
 ♣ A 9 x

**West**  
 ♠ Q J 9 x  
 ♥ Q 8 x x  
 ♦ J x  
 ♣ K 7 x

**East (D)**  
 ♠ x  
 ♥ K 10 9 x  
 ♦ K 10 9 x  
 ♣ J 8 x x

**South**  
 ♠ A 10 x x  
 ♥ A x x  
 ♦ A Q x  
 ♣ Q 10 x

Hand 2: No one is vulnerable. The bidding:

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
Pass	Pass	1NT	Pass
2NT (!)	Double *	Pass	2C (?)
	All Pass		

**Notes:**

East double (\*) is for take-out but I do not have spades. West bids 2C (?) -- partner does not guarantee 4 hearts. If this gets doubled loudly, West can run to 2H.

North now comes into the auction with 2NT (!) -- to play with his hefty 8 high card points. Seems reasonable. With a H lead, 2NT is defeated. If East had not balanced, a S lead would allow 2NT to make.

**North**

♠ 10 x x  
♥ x x x  
♦ x x  
♣ Q x x x x

**West**

♠ A J 9 x x  
♥ K x x  
♦ K J  
♣ J 10 x

**East (D)**

♠ x  
♥ Q J 9 x  
♦ Q 10 x x x  
♣ K x x

**South**

♠ K Q x x  
♥ A x x  
♦ A 9 x x  
♣ A x

Hand 3: North-South is vulnerable. The bidding:

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
Pass	Double *	Pass	1NT
Pass or (?)		Pass	Pass

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**Notes:**

East's double (\*) is Bennett -- take out without spades.

West with a hefty opening bid and spades, passes. North has a problem.

**North**

♠ J x x  
♥ Q x x  
♦ J 9 x x  
♣ J x x

**West**

♠ K x  
♥ 10 9 x  
♦ A 10 x  
♣ K Q x x

**East (D)**

♠ Q 10 9 x x  
♥ K J x x x  
♦ x x  
♣ x

**South**

♠ A x x  
♥ A x  
♦ K Q x  
♣ A 10 x x x

Hand 4: East-West is vulnerable. The bidding:

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
Pass	Pass	1NT	Pass
All Pass	2D (*)	Pass	2H

**Notes:**

2D (\*) = the majors; Bennett is the same as Hamilton or DONT.

2H = to play. Note: in all the hands East has a singleton. It is MANDATORY to bid in the balancing seat with distribution.

# The Coolest Gizmos and Gadgets



## "Bennett"

This gizmo is so cool that I hate to share it. Not only have I played it for more than 20 years, but it has produced mostly stellar results along the way. This is one of those treatments that I live for, just praying that I am playing with a regular partner when the situation pops up.

When you pass as opener, many types of hands are eliminated from the ones that you might have. You can't have an opening bid, for example, and you can't have a normal weak two-bid. You get the idea. So when you pass and left-hand opponent opens 1NT (weak or strong) and it is passed back to you, don't you think you might modify the system you play to cater to the hands you might hold? In the balancing seat (and only by passed hand), therefore, you really should be playing "Bennett." Bennett goes like this: Pass-(1NT)-Pass-Pass back to you. Double = takeout without spades; 2♣ = takeout without hearts; 2♦ = majors; and 2♥ or 2♠ =

major-minor two-suiter with at least a five-card minor. That's the outline, and now, some history of this convention.

Back in 1989, Senior World Champion and Grand Life Master Hamish Bennett was playing with Byron Greenberg, aka "Beaumont," in a year-end regional pair game in Reno. Byron suggested they play this very cool gizmo, and Hamish agreed to it. In the second session, Hamish held:

♠QJ92 ♥Q732 ♦K6 ♣J94

Byron passed, RHO opened 1NT, and this was passed back to Byron who balanced with a double, a takeout with short spades. After a brief pause, Hamish remembered and Alerted. After opener passed, for safety, Hamish pulled it to 2♣ (prepared to run to hearts if doubled) but his LHO grumpily bid 2NT, which ended the auction. Had the auction ended in 1NT, Hamish would have led a spade no doubt, but on this auction he fired out a heart which scuttled 2NT, down one. 12 matchpoints! Byron did not have much for his double, but did have a singleton spade with a 1=4=4=4 shape.

Ten years later I was playing in a Seattle regional knockout final with Hamish against a good Paul Soloway team. Soloway opened 1NT in second seat and Hamish, being a passed hand, balanced with 2♣ (takeout with short hearts). Everyone passed, and Hamish made four! (It could have been held to three.) At the other table, 1NT was passed out, and our teammate declarer made two, for a net gain of 6 IMPs. We won the match by 3. With-

out this gizmo, Hamish would have never balanced in this manner, and a 2♣ contract could never have been a possibility. The major key to successfully bidding against a notrump opener as a passed hand is to have a singleton or void. This system caters to the three-suited hands with specific shortness.

At another tournament, I can recall sitting behind the second-seat notrump opener with a flattish 13-HCP hand. To my joy and amazement, I heard partner reopen with a double (showing, again, a takeout without spades). Although this double has an upper limit of 11 HCPs and the minimum could be around 7 or 8 depending on how frisky the doubler feels, I had no trouble leaving it in and knew not to lead a spade. Plus 500 was sweet.

Although Hamish did not invent this gizmo, we are both loyal advocates of it. Now it has a name. In fact, when Hamish played it with Alan Truscott, not only did Alan love it, but he told Hamish that it would be included in the next *Encyclopedia of Bridge*. Unfortunately Alan passed away before that happened. Hope it is not too late to be included in the next one. One last request: please don't play it against us! □

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