

Well-known teacher and player **Jerry Helms** answers your bridge questions. Send your questions to jeryhelms@aol.com.

Ask Jerry



Dear Jerry: I've been told that I shouldn't open a weak two-bid with three or more cards in an unbid major suit. What's your opinion?

O. Harrison
New York, NY

Dear O.H.: Advice like that goes against one of my favorite principles: *"Always look for reasons to bid rather than excuses to pass."* Don't let yourself be talked out of making a weak two-bid just because you have three-card, or even four-card, support for a side major suit.

For example, I ♠ K Q J 10 8 3
would open this ♥ 8 7 6 4
hand with a weak ♦ 6 2
2♠ bid in first, ♣ 7

second, or third position at any vulnerability. One of my Jerry-isms is: *"Always try to make bids that most resemble the cards you hold."* This hand looks like a weak two-bid in spades, feels like a weak two-bid in spades, and *is* a weak two-bid in spades! Don't be deterred by the four-card heart suit.

The hand is unlikely to play better in hearts than spades even if partner has a four-card or longer heart suit. You have no defensive strength outside the spade suit, so start with a descriptive 2♠ bid. If the opponents bid, partner will be well-placed to decide whether to pass, bid game, double, or take a sacrifice.

You must still exercise judgment when deciding whether to open with a weak two- ♠ A K 8 5 4 3
bid. Contrast the ♥ Q 9 6 4
previous hand ♦ 6 2
with this one. ♣ 7

I wouldn't open 2♠ with this hand, even though there is a six-card suit and only 9 high-card points. If partner is short in spades and has four or more hearts, we belong in hearts, not spades. Also, this hand has much better defensive prospects if the opponents buy the contract.

If I open 2♠ with this hand, partner won't be nearly as well placed to decide whether to pass or bid and whether to take a sacrifice if the opponents enter the auction.

I would pass with this hand, planning to enter the auction later. If I later show length in spades, partner will be aware that I don't have an ideal weak-two bid since I didn't start with 2♠. That should help partner judge what to do as the auction progresses. —**JH**