

**“Reverse Flannery’ as Another Way to Show Partner
(1) That You Are 2-Suited in the Majors
As Well As (2) Your HCP Count”**

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Marty Bergen (1948 -) is a 10-time National Bridge Champion. Bergen has written a column in the ACBL Bridge Bulletin since 1976. Two of his **69+** bridge books/booklets have won “Best Bridge Book of the Year Awards” from the American Bridge Teachers’ Association. His 1996 book, Points Schmoints!, one of the best book award winners, has been especially influential. Bergen has invented quite a few bridge conventions/systems including DON’T, Bergen Limit Raises, and in the first few pages of Points Schmoints!, the “**Rule of 20**”.² One of Esther’s *most treasured* bridge books is Bergen’s 2011 little “pocket book”, Pocket Posh: Tips for Bridge Players.

Within his 2011 “pocket book” Bergen emphasizes very strongly that 2-Suited Hands play very well in Suit Contracts. That fact indeed is the basis for Bergen’s “**Rule of 20**”. Within his 2011 book Bergen notes that:

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¹ As noted in an article in the Winter/Spring, 2024 article in The American Bridge Teachers’ Association (ABTA) Journal, https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/ABTA_1_24.pdf, Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen in fact is a hypothetical, and not a real person! So this article was really, really written by Bruce Thompson.

² Within the “**Esther Bridge Lessons**” see “**Some of the 40 or So Bridge Bidding/Play ‘Rules’**”:
<https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/rules.pdf>

“Any hand with 5-5 distribution has great potential. This is especially true when you have good suits, and really gets exciting once you find a fit.” (p. 17)

Of course, holding a 2-Suited Hand when your **2** “long” Suits are both Majors is particularly exciting because contracts set in the Majors yield higher Bridge Scores than do contracts set in the Minors. This reality led to the creation of the “**Flannery Convention**” opening bid to “show” that you hold **5** Heart cards and **4** Spade cards as explained by Esther in “Esther Bridge Convention Lesson #6”:

<https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/flannery.pdf>

The “**Flannery Convention**” bid is a bid by Opener and not a bid by the Responder. However, there is another convention, the “**Reverse Flannery Convention**”, that is bid by Responder when Partner opens **1C** or **1D**, so that the Responder can “show” a Hand that is 2-Suited in the Majors.

As explained by Robert Todd in his web posting “Reverse Flannery”³ on his “Adventures in Bridge” website the auction proceeds as:

1. Opener Responder
 1C or **1D** **2H!**⁴ says, “Partner, I hold (1) **5** Spades, (2) **4-5** Hearts, and (3) less than “invitational” values (usually **5-9** HCPs).”
2. Opener Responder
 1C or **1D** **2S!**⁴ says, “Partner, I hold (1) **5** Spades, (2) **4-5** Hearts, and (3) “invitational” values (usually **10-11** HCPs).”

Most Partnerships play the “**Reverse Flannery Convention**” as being “on” even if the Responder’s RHO DOUBLES.

Opener’s Response Bids to
Responder’s “**Reverse Flannery**” Bid

- A. PASS “I hold ‘minimum’ HCPs but Spades. Please stop!”

³ See: <https://www.advinbridge.com/this-week-in-bridge/590>

⁴ “!” means this bid **must** be Alerted! as being “artificial”.

- B. **2NT** "Responder, I hold 'invitational' or better HCPs, please tell me more about your Hand."
- C. **3C!** "Partner, my bid is 'Game Forcing'. Do you hold a Club 'stopper'?"
- D. **3D** "Partner, I hold an 'extra' Diamond. Let's play **3D**."
- E. **3H** "Partner, let's play **3H**."
- F. **3S** "Partner, I hold **3+** Spades. Can we 'make' **4S**?"
- G. **3NT** "Partner, let's play **3NT**."

Example "Real Deal" Board
On Which the "**Reverse Flannery Convention**"
Could Have Been Helpful

Knoxville #499er 3/11/26 Board #3

Dealer: **SOUTH**

Vul: **E/W**

	NORTH (14)	
	S: 6 4 3	
	H: A Q 3 2	
	D: A T 9 7	
	C: A 5	
WEST (9)		EAST (10)
S: K J 9 2		S: A
H: T 7		H: 8 6 4
D: Q 5		D: K 6 4 3
C: K T 9 7 2		C: Q J 6 4 3
	SOUTH (7)	
	S: Q T 8 7 5	
	H: K J 9 5	
	D: J 8 2	
	C: 8	

Bidding

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
PASS	PASS	1D	PASS
1S	PASS	1NT	PASS
PASS	PASS		

Responder SOUTH correctly bid his 5-card Major holding **2** Spade Honors rather than his 4-card Heart Major. Regrettably, on this

"Real Deal" N/S missed their 8-card Heart "fit" because N/S were not playing the "**Reverse Flannery Convention**"!

Why "Showing" Partner Your Hand Is 2-Suited Is **So Important**

As noted previously, a 2-Suited Hand plays very well when you are playing Suit contracts. However, there is another reason why it is important to "show" Partner your 2-Suited Hand: the probability of finding a "fit" with Partner go up *massively* as your 2 Suits get "longer". The probability of finding an 8-card "fit" when your 2 Suits are **4-3** is **49%**, when your 2 Suits are **4-4** is **60%**, and when your 2 Suits are **5-3** is **66%**. But when your 2 Suits are **5-4** is **74%**, and when your 2 Suits are **5-5** is **84%**!⁵

Conventions With Which Opener or Responder "Shows" a 2-Suited Hand

The fact that 2-Suited Hands play well in Suit contracts is honored by the various conventions with which the Opener or the Responder can "show" a 2-Suited Hand:

1. The "**Flannery Convention**" with which an Opener "shows" both Majors by bidding 2**D**!:
<https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/flannery.pdf>
2. The "**Reverse Flannery Convention**" with which a Responder "shows" a Hand 2-Suited in the Majors.
3. The "**Unusual 2NT Convention**" with which an Overcaller of an Opponent's Suit bid "shows" a Hand 2-Suited in the 2 "lowest" unbid Suits:
https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/unus_2NT.pdf
4. The "**Michaels Cuebid**" with which Overcaller of an Opponent's Suit bid "shows" a Hand 2-Suited in the 2 "highest" unbid Suits:
https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/5_cuebids.pdf

⁵ Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons" see "**A Comprehensive List of 8 Different Categories of Bridge Probabilities, and How These May Help Guide Your Bidding and Play**":
https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/8_probs.pdf

Frequency of "Reverse-Flannery-Eligible" Hands

You will be dealt a Hand that is **5-4** in the **2** "longest" Suits in **24.7%** of randomly-dealt Hands (5431 = **12.9%**, 5422 = **10.6%**, 5440 = **1.2%**; $12.9\% + 10.6\% + 1.2\% = \mathbf{24.7\%}$).⁶ There are **6** possible 5-4 Suit combinations (i.e., S-H, S-D, S-C, H-D, H-C, D-C). Therefore, you will be dealt a Hand that is 5-4 in the Majors in $24.7\% / 6 = \mathbf{4.1\%}$ of the Hands you are randomly dealt.

You will be dealt a Hand that is **5-5** in the **2** "longest" Suits in **24.7%** of randomly-dealt Hands (5521 = **3.2%**, 5530 = **0.9%**; $12.9\% + 3.2\% + 0.\% = \mathbf{4.1\%}$). There are **6** possible 5-5 Suit combinations (i.e., S-H, S-D, S-C, H-D, H-C, D-C). Therefore, you will be dealt a Hand that is 5-5 in the Majors in $4.1\% / 6 = \mathbf{0.7\%}$ of the Hands you are randomly dealt. Therefore, you will be dealt "Reverse-Flannery-Eligible" Hands (i.e., 5-4 or 5-5 in the Majors) in $4.1\% + 0.7\% = \mathbf{4.8\%}$ of the Hands you are randomly dealt!

⁶ See "Relevant Percentages for Bridge Players":
<https://www.bridgewebs.com/taverham/Probabilities.pdf>