The *x-y-z* Convention

(*Norman Pestaina, Revised: Jan 01, 2018*)

Applicability:

After **any sequence of three 1-level bids**; there are 10 possible such sequences:

Sequence 1		Sequence 2		Sequence 3		Sequence 4	
1♣	1♦	1♣	1♦	1♣	1♦	1♣	1♥
1♥		1♠		1N		1♠	

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Sequence 5		Sequence 6		Sequence 7		Sequence 8	
1♣	1♥	1♣	1♠	1♦	1♥	1♦	1♥
1N		1N		1♠		1N	

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Sequence 9		Sequence 10	
1♦	1♠	1♥	1♠
1N		1N	

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- *x-y-z* is **off** if responder has previously passed; *New-Minor-Forcing* may then be employed.
- *x-y-z* is **off** if responder passes at the 1st turn, whether or not the opponents intervene.
- *x-y-z* is still **on** if the opponents intervene, so long as opener's 2nd bid is at the 1-level, (**optionally**) including sequences where responder's 1st bid was either *double* or *redouble*.
- *x-y-z* replaces *New-Minor-Forcing* and *4th-Suit-Forcing* whenever it is applicable. *New-Minor-Forcing* and *4th-Suit-Forcing* still apply otherwise (when *x-y-z* is not applicable).

The basic agreement:

x-y-z is invoked by **responder at his 2nd turn by bidding either 2♣ or 2♦**.

- Responder's **2♣** bid is artificial and **is the only means of initiating an invitation-to game sequence**. Opener is obligated to relay to 2♦, also artificial, after which responder indicates the nature of his invitation. **Note**: the *x-y-z* 2♣ is artificial even if opener's first bid was 1♣.
- Responder's **2♦** bid is artificial and **is unconditionally forcing to game**. Subsequent bidding is usually natural until game is reached. **Note**: the *x-y-z* 2♦ is artificial even if either partner's 1st bid was 1♦.

Corollaries:

1. Following an *x-y-z* sequence in which opener's first bid was 1♣, it is impossible for responder to sign off in 2♣ since 2♣ initiates an x-y-z invitational sequence.
2. To invite game in NT, responder must start an invitational sequence via 2♣, and follow the forced 2♦ by bidding 2N. (Remember: All invitational sequences start with 2♣).
3. Responder's 2nd-turn 2N is a **Lebensohl**-like relay to 3♣. For example: 1♣ - 1♥; 1N - 2N; 3♣ - pass. (The 2N bid is not an invitation since all invitations begin with 2♣.)
4. Since responder's second turn 2♦ bid is forcing, responder cannot sign off in 2♦ directly; he must relay through 2♣, then pass the forced 2♦ response: 1♦ - 1♠; 1N - 2♣; 2♦ - pass.
5. Responder's second turn **non-reverse** 2♥ and 2♠ bids are non-forcing.
6. Responder's second turn jumps are natural and game-forcing.

Examples of basic x-y-z sequences:

- x, y and z designate any denomination (♣ or ♦ or ♥ or ♠ or NT).
- m designates a minor, ♣ or ♦. M designates a major, ♥ or ♠. N designates no-trump.

1.	1m	1y	
	1M	1N	Sign-off, balanced 7 – 10, denying 4-card support for opener's Major.
2.	1m	1y	
	1M	2M	Weak raise of opener's major, 7 – 10, denying invitational strength.
3.	1♣	1y	
	1z	2N	
	3♣	pass	Weak sign-off, normally with 5 or more ♣'s.
4.	1♦	1M	
	1z	2♣	
	2♦	pass	Responder must employ the *x-y-z* invitational relay to sign off in 2♦.
5.	1m	1♠	
	1N	2♥	Not forcing; suggesting a part-score in either of 2♥, 2♠ or 2N
6.	1x	1y	
	1M	2♣	
	2♦	2M	Inviting game in opener's major.
7.	1x	1M	
	1z	2♣	
	2♦	2M	Inviting game in responder's major, usually with a suit of 5 or more cards.
8.	1x	1y	
	1z	2♣	
	2♦	2N	Inviting game in No-Trump, usually a balanced good 10 to a poor 12
9.	1m	1♠	
	1N	2♣	
	2♦	2♥	Invitational with 5 ♠'s and 4 or more ♥'s
10.	1m	1y	
	1z	2♣	
	2♦	3m	Invitational, support for opener's minor, no stopper in the un-bid suit
11.	1x	1y	
	1z	2♦	General-purpose game force; subsequent bidding below game is natural.
12.	1x	1y	
	1z	3y	Game force, for example with a solid suit of 6 or more cards

x-y-x Jump Rebids:

In an x-y-x sequence there are 3 conventional bids available to responder on their 2nd turn:

1x	1y
1z	2♦	unconditionally forcing to game

1x	1y
1z	2♣	forces 2♦ by opener, usually to start a game invitation

1x	1y
1z	2N	forces 3♣ by opener, usually to play, when opener's 1st bid was 1♣

It follows that other non-jump 2nd turn bids by responder are not forcing since responder failed to deploy the 2♣ bid. Equally, 2nd turn jumps must be forcing to game if responder bypasses 2♣. A partnership would do well to discuss and compare the following sequences, and especially to distinguish between game-forcing sequences (C) and (D):

	(A)		(B)		(C)		(D)	
1:	Sign-Off		Invitational		Game-Force		Jump Re-bid	
	1♦	1♠	1♦	1♠	1♦	1♠	1♦	1♠
	1N	2♠	1N	2♣	1N	2♦	1N	3♠
			2♦	2♠	2♥	2♠		

	(A)		(B)		(C)		(D)	
2:	Sign-Off		Invitational		Game-Force		Jump Re-bid	
	1♦	1♠	1♦	1♠	1♦	1♠	1♦	1♠
	1N	2♣	1N	2♣	1N	2♦	1N	3♦
	2♦	pass	2♦	3♦	2♥	3♦		

	(A)		(B)		(C)		(D)	
3:	Sign-Off		Invitational		Game-Force		Jump Re-bid	
	1♣	1♠	1♣	1♠	1♣	1♠	1♣	1♠
	1N	2N	1N	2♣	1N	2♦	1N	3♣
	3♣	pass	2♦	3♣	2♥	3♣		

Responder's Splinter Bids

Standard Splinters for Opener's 2nd Suit

1♣	1♦	1♣	1♦	1♣	1♥	1♦	1♥
1♥	3♠, 4♣	1♠	4♣, 4♥	1♠	4♣, 4♦	1♠	4♣, 4♦

(Note: Responder may splinter in opener's 1st suit)

Often, the anonymous splinter suit, ♦ or ♥, has been bid naturally by responder at their 1st turn, and is unambiguous only when it is the 4th suit:

1♣	1♦	1♣	1♦	1♣	1♥	1♦	1♥
1♥	(3♦)	1♠	(3♥)	1♠	(3♥)	1♠	(3♥)

Therefore, the anonymous splinter is available only when in the direct seat.

Self-Splinters
In an x-y-z sequence, the self-splinter is available to responder only when opener's re-bid is 1N:

1m	1♥		1m	1♠		1♥	1♠
1N	3♠, 4♣, 4♦		1N	4♣, 4♦, 4♥		1N	4♣, 4♦, 4♥

(Note: Responder may splinter in opener's 1ˢᵗ suit)

Picture Bids

In an *x-y-z* sequence, jumps to game by responder that bypass the 2♦ game-force may be used by responder to describe specific holdings. Further, since responder's 2♣ and 2N at his second turn are artificial with forced responses, prefixing a game bid with a 2♣ or 2N relay provides a strategy to allow finer resolution of responder's specific holding.

	Direct		via 2♣		via 2N	
No-Trump						
	1x	1y	1x	1y	1x	1y
	1z	3N	1z	2♣	1z	2N
			2♦	3N	3♣	3N
Opener's Major						
	1x	1y	1x	1y	1x	1y
	1M	4M	1M	2♣	1M	2N
			2♦	4M	3♣	4M
Responder's Major						
	1x	1M	1x	1M	1x	1M
	1z	4M	1z	2♣	1z	2N
			2♦	4M	3♣	4M

*A partnership may assign specific **picture-bid** meanings to jump rebids and continuations following the 2♣ and 2N relays.* For some treatments due to BBO_INQUIRY, see:
http://bboinquiry.blogspot.com/2005/06/wnat-is-xyz.html.