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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sequence 1</th>
<th>Sequence 2</th>
<th>Sequence 3</th>
<th>Sequence 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1♣ 1♥</td>
<td>1♣ 1♣</td>
<td>1♣ 1♣</td>
<td>1♣ 1♥</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1♥</td>
<td>1♣</td>
<td>1N</td>
<td>1♣</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sequence 5</th>
<th>Sequence 6</th>
<th>Sequence 7</th>
<th>Sequence 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1♣ 1♥</td>
<td>1♣ 1♣</td>
<td>1♥ 1♥</td>
<td>1♥ 1♥</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1N</td>
<td>1N</td>
<td>1♥</td>
<td>1N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sequence 9</th>
<th>Sequence 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1♦ 1♠</td>
<td>1♥ 1♠</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1N</td>
<td>1N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 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):

1: (A) (B) (C) (D)
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♣

2: (A) (B) (C) (D)
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♦

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>via 2♣</th>
<th>via 2N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No-Trump</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1x 1y</td>
<td>1x 1y</td>
<td>1x 1y</td>
<td>1x 1y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1z 3N</td>
<td>1z 2♣</td>
<td>1z 2N</td>
<td>3♣ 3N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opener’s Major</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1x 1y</td>
<td>1x 1y</td>
<td>1x 1y</td>
<td>1x 1y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1M 4M</td>
<td>1M 2♣</td>
<td>1M 2N</td>
<td>3♣ 4M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responder’s Major</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1x 1M</td>
<td>1x 1M</td>
<td>1x 1M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1z 4M</td>
<td>1z 2♣</td>
<td>1z 2N</td>
<td>3♣ 4M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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: