



Polish club - *system summary based on an inquiry of top Polish players*
(comments and interpretation by Martin Johnson 2004)

The Polish club has several variations, with the following common features

- a. five card majors with a forcing 1NT response
- b. natural 4+ diamonds in an unbalanced hand
- c. 1NT natural with 15-17 HCP
- d. a multi meaning 1♣ opening, most commonly a balanced hand of 12-14 HCP or 18-20 HCP.

The most common variation known as WJ2000 after the convention card used by Wspolny and Jezek as submitted to the World Bridge federation. The remaining notes follow that method.

The latest version is WJ2005 by Jassem, [click here](#) for an english version.

Openings

1♣ - either

- balanced hand with at least two clubs, 12-14 HCP, no five card major - Preparatory
- hand of 4414 shape with diamond singleton -
- six or more clubs in a hand of 15+ HCP - Natural
- an 18+ HCP of almost any shape - Strong

1♦ - 12-17 HCP with either

- 5+ diamonds
- 4 diamonds and 5 clubs
- 4441 pattern with 4 diamonds

1M - 5+ suit, with 12-17 HCP, forcing 1NT response, 2/1 responses game forcing, structure similar to in standard or two over one systems.

1NT - 15-17 HCP, responses may follow two or four suit transfers, with Lebensohl after interference.

2♣ - Precision, 11-14 HCP, with usual rebids

2♦ - Willkosz (5+, 5+ at least one major, 6-10 HCP) - In WJ2005 this opening was changed to show a weak two bid in a major (Multi)

2♥, 2♠ - Weak two bids - In WJ2005 these openings were changed to show respectively 55 in hearts and a second suit and 55 in spades and a minor.

2NT - minors (5+, 5+, 6-10 HCP)

3NT - gambling, no side stopper

4♣, 4♦ - nine + tricks in hearts/spades respectively

Responses and subsequent bidding

After 1♣ opening

1♦ - either negative (0-6), or semi-positive (7-11) with minor(s), or balanced 17+

Openers rebids

1M - 12-14 HCP, 4 card suit, conceivably three in balanced hand

1NT - 18-20 then transfers and Stayman apply

2♣ - natural, 15-18 HCP, not forcing

2♦ - game force or 23+ balanced, then 2♥ second negative

2M, 3m - Acol two bid,

2NT - 21-22 HCP

1M - 7+ HCP, four + suit.

Opener rebids

1♠, 1N, 2M - natural, 12-14 balanced hand

2♣ - natural, 5+ clubs, one round force

2♦ - artificial, 18+ HCP with 3+ support for responders suit

Responder rebids by step

1NT - 7-11, denies a major, can be played as promising 3 or 4 clubs

Opener rebids

P - all or most 12-14 HCP hands
2♣ - natural, 15+, one round force
2♦ - game force, 21+
2M - 17-21

2♣ /♦ - Natural game force, denies a major.

Opener rebids

2M - stopper?
2N or raise - 12-14 balanced
3♣ /2♦ - long clubs
3♦ /2♣ - 18+ with 3+ support?
3M - 18+ natural, 5+ suit

2♥ /♠ - 4-6 HCP with 6 card suit

Opener rebids

P - any 12-14 HCP hand
3♣ /4♣ - natural, not forcing
2NT - 18-20 balanced, no fit
Raises - 18+ with fit
2♠ - 18+ natural
3♦ - ??

2NT - 12-16 balanced, game force, no 4+ major

Opener rebids

3N - common
3♣ - 15+ with long clubs, then stopper showing
3♦ - strong, non specific
3M - 18+ with major

3♣ /3♦ - 4-6 HCP with 6 or 7 card suit

Opener rebids

3N - 18+ with fit
P - common
3M - forcing one round, 18+

After 1♣ -1♦ response

The 1♦ response can be 0-6 HCP, 7-11 HCP with at least 4 diamonds, or 17+ HCP. Opener presumes the 0-6 hand and rebids accordingly.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♦
?	

1M - longer major in 12-14 HCP hand, may be 3 card suit. (with 7+ minor cards)

Responder rebids

Pass - 4 card support or very weak hand

1NT - not constructive but may be 7-11 HCP with diamond length and weak in openers major

2m - to play

1♠ or 2♥ - weak hand, 5+ suit

Raise - unusual rebid, perhaps weak hand with 5 card support??

2NT - 17+ balanced, game force

1N - 18-20 HCP, Stayman and transfer rebids apply. 2♣ then 3m by responder should be forcing??

2♣ - 15+ HCP with club one suiter, forcing one round, responder should show stopper or fit (3♣ raise is not forcing)

2♦ - 23+ balanced, or any game forcing hand. Responders 2♥ rebid is waiting, others are positive and natural. Auction may stop below game only if opener rebids 2NT.

2M - 18-21 with 5+ suit, forcing one round. Responders 3♣ rebid is second negative, 2NT response is semi positive, may be long clubs

♠ AKQxx	♠ x	1♣	1♦
♥ KQJ	♥ xxx	2♠	2NT
♦ AJ10x	♦ xxx	3♦	3NT
♣ x	♣ AJxxxx	P	

2NT - 21-22 balanced, Stayman, transfers and MSS apply.

3♣ / ♦ - could be assigned a special meaning, say 20+ three suited hand ??

After 1♣ -1M response

Responder shows at least 7 HCP with 4+ card major. Opener with support should raise, other minimum rebids show 12-14 without support. Jump rebids show strong hands, and 2♦ rebid is specialized.

1♣ 1M

?

1♠ - 4 card suit, denies 4 hearts

Responder rebids

1NT, 2♦, 2♥, 2♠ - natural, to play

2nt, 3♥, 3♠ - invite

3♣, 3♦ - canapé, to play

2♣ - artificial, one round force, asks three card support, rebid at three level by responder is forcing??

1NT - 12-14, denies a fit

Responders rebids follow same pattern as after 1♠ rebid directly above

2M - 12-14 with fit

Responders 2NT rebid is forcing, asking further natural description, new suit bids are help suit game tries.

2♣ - long clubs, 15+ HCP, forcing one round

Responders 2♦ rebid is neutral, no descriptive bid available, 3♣ raise is game force, jumps in new suits may be played as splinters??. After 2♦ rebid opener will show 3 card support for major if possible, or bid 2OM or 2NT natural, 3♣ as limited, higher are splinters.

2♦ - 18+ HCP with 3+ support for M, game forcing

Responder rebids in steps to show his high cards and major length. Hands of 7-9 HCP are minimum, 10+ are considered strong.

First step - minimum, 4M

Second step - maximum, 4M

Third step - minimum, 5M

Fourth step - maximum, 5M

Fifth and sixth step - minimum or maximum with 6M

2♥ / 1♠ or 2♠ / 1♥ - 18-21 with 5+ suit, game forcing, responder should raise or splinter jump with 3+ support, others natural

2NT - 18+ HCP balanced, denies three card support for major

Responder should rebid 3M only with 6 and slam interest, 3♣ instead asks for opener to show a suit??

After 1♦ opening (11-21, 4+ diamonds)

The 1♦ opening promises 4+ diamonds in an unbalanced hand. This does not affect the responding structure in any significant way, so you can use the same structure as you would in standard methods. As we shall see later, openers no trump rebids however have a special significance.

Opener	Responder
1♦	?

1M - 4+ suit, usually 6+ HCP

1N - 6-10 HCP, balanced, no major

2♣ - 10+ HCP, forces to 2nt only, 4+ suit

2♦ - inverted raise, 10+ HCP, one round force, 4+ trumps

2M - weak jump, 6+ suit with 3-7 HCP 2NT - 13+ HCP, balanced, with clubs, denies 4 diamonds

3♣ - preemptive, but not broke, especially vulnerable versus not

3♦ - preemptive, 5+ support

Openers rebids

If opener rebids in a major, he shows 5 cards in diamonds (e.g. 1♦ -2♣ -2M or 1♦ -1♥ -1♠, the latter could be 4144 also).

If opener rebids in no trump, he shows a semi - balanced hand, 6322 or more likely 5422 (e.g. 1♦ -1♠ -1NT).

If opener rebids in clubs, he shows at least 9 minor cards, 45 or 54.

If opener rebids in diamonds (except after an inverted raise), he shows 6+ diamonds.

Raises by opener are normal, support doubles are used if opponent interferes at 1 or 2 level, double jumps are splinter raises.

After 1♦ -1♠, opener may raise on three card support, usually with 4 hearts also and lacking values for reverse.

The sequence 1♦ -1♠ -2♥ is a one round force reverse, responders 2♠ rebid show 5+ suit and is forcing but not necessarily strong, 2NT rebid is Lebensohl, opener must bid 3♣ or 3♦, then responders rebids are not forcing. After the reverse, if responder's next bid is at three level, it is game forcing with generally 9+ HCP.

Special sequences after 1♦ opening

Opener	Responder
1♦	1M
1NT	?

2♣ - new minor. Subsequent 3♣ or 3♦ by responder forcing.

2♦, 2M - to play

3♦ - invite, no help in at least one unbid suit

3♣ - to play.

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
2♠	2NT (relay)
?	

3♣, 3♥ - natural or strong fragment

3♦ - 5 good or 6 diamonds

3♠ - confirms 4 card support

3NT - ??

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
2♥	2♠ (relay)
?	

2NT - confirm 3 card support only

Others - natural

Jumps - delayed splinters

After 1M opening (11-17, 5+ suit)

Major suit openings may be lighter than in standard or 2/1, so a general non forcing style is used in responding.

Opener	Responder
1M	?

1♠ - forcing, natural, 4+ suit

After 1NT rebid, 2♣ asks, then 2♦ = no fit, 2♠ = 3 card support

1NT - not forcing, around 6-10 HCP

2 over one - 10+ HCP, natural, one round force

2M - 6-9 HCP, usually 3 card support only 3M - preemptive, 4+ support

2NT - limit raise or better in support of M, 4+ trumps

Openers 3M rebid to play, others at 3 level natural, jumps are self splinters

Jumps - strong, game force, one suited hands

Double jumps - splinters

After 1M-two over one response

A raise of responders suit is not forcing, now is a rebid of openers major or a 2NT rebid. New suits by opener are forcing but do not promise extras. Jump rebids by opener are splinters at four level, show strong 55 hands at three level. A Jump rebid of 3NT may be used to show 15-17 HCP balanced, however you wish to open that type of hand with 1NT, then 3NT could be used artificially, to show some kind of raise of responders suit.

Responder must rebid a new suit at his second turn to force, a bid of the third suit should be natural (at least promising stoppers in that suit), a bid of the fourth suit may be entirely artificial, and asks opener as first priority to rebid in no trump with a stopper in that suit. A hand like Kx Jx Qx AKJ10xx should respond 3♣ to a major opening, since there is no convenient rebid after starting with 2♣ .

After 1NT opening (15-17)

Since the 1NT opening is the same as in standard, you may use any set of responses you wish, two suit or four suit transfers, for example. In WJ2000 you do not open 1NT with a five card major, six card minor or any 5422 patterns. The response structure is

Opener	Responder
1NT	?

2♣ - Stayman, promises a four card major

2♦ - Jacoby transfer

2♥ - Jacoby transfer

2♠ - Size ask with no major, or long clubs not invitational

2NT - transfer to diamonds (6+ suit with super accept)

3♣ - 5 diamonds, 4 card major, singleton club. Opener rebids 3M with four, 3♦ with fit, else 3NT

3♦ - 5 clubs, 4 card major, singleton diamond. Opener rebids 3M with four, 4♣ with fit, else 3NT.

3♥ - minors 54, singleton heart, usually 3145 or 3154. Opener rebids 3♠ with 4 and no trump doubts.

3♠ - minors 54, singleton spade, usually 1345 or 1354

Repeat Stayman

The above scheme relies heavily on responder showing a singleton. With game going hands lacking a singleton, responder can use a form of repeat Stayman to determine opener's exact hand pattern and strength.

1NT	2♣
2♦	?

2♥ - to play, or opener may correct to 2♠

2♠ - repeat Stayman, game forcing, may be 54 in majors or interested in minor slam. Opener rebids

2NT - no 5 card minor, then 3♣ is another relay, opener rebidding

3♦ - 3343 3♥ - 2344 3♠ - 3244 3NT - 3334

3♣ - 5 clubs, then 3♦ asks for doubleton

3♦ - 5 diamonds, doubleton club

3M - 5 diamonds, doubleton in bid major

2NT - natural invite, at least one major

3m - invite, 5 card minor

3M - splinter?, 4 cards in other major

1NT	2♣
2♥	?

2♠ - forcing with 4 spades.

2NT - invite, different to 2♠ is unclear

3♣ - repeat Stayman, then opener rebids

3♦, 3♠ - 4 card suit

3♥ - 3433

3NT - 4 clubs

3♦ - invite with 5 diamonds and 4 spades

3♥ - invite

Higher new suits - splinters for hearts

1NT	2♣
2♠	?

2NT - invite with 4 hearts

3♣ - repeat Stayman, opener rebids

3♦ - 4♠ and 4♦

3♥ - 4234

3♠ - 4333

3NT - 4324

3♦ - invite with 5 diamonds and 4 hearts

3♥ - ??

3♠ - invite

After 2♣ opening (5♣ +4M or 6♣ , 11-14)

The responding structure to a 2♣ opening follows Precision, however the more limited range for the bid makes it a bit easier to handle.

There are two types of hands which are difficult for responder

- Responder has a singleton or void in clubs and 8-11 HCP, game in a major is possible if a fit is found, but the potential club misfit makes it dangerous to explore.
- Responder has a moderate to weak five card major and some club tolerance, again with invitational values. Bidding the suit can result in an inferior part score, not bidding it in missing a game in that suit.

There is no panacea for either of these problems, and in some cases standard bidding has an easier time of it. The plus side is that a 2♣ opening can present opponents with problems also.

Opener	Responder
2♣	?

Pass - common with short clubs, note 2♣ opening is roughly 50-50 to have a major only. 2♦ - relay bid, asking if opener has a major, the most common response. Opener rebids

2M - 4 card suit, then cheapest bid can be played as relay for additional shape??

2NT - six+ clubs, no singleton , then 3♦ asks stopper

3♣ - six+ clubs and a singleton, then 3♦ asks singleton

2M - decent five+ suit, some values but not enough to force to game. Opener rebids

Pass - 2 card support

2♠ , 2NT, 3♣ - natural, usually heart singleton

3♦ - maximum, likely high honor doubleton in M

3M, 4M - natural raises, 3 or 4 card support

2NT - 10-12 HCP, invite. (My view is this bid is next to useless, as opener with a singleton really never knows when to pass, this is better used to show a strong club fit with slam interest).

3♣ - invite, around 10-12 HCP

3♦ , 3M - forcing with good six card suit, then new suit by opener at three level is stopper, at four level is cue bid with fit for responders suit.

After 2♦ opening (two suiter with one major, 6-10 HCP, Wilkosz)

My view is the two suited hands should be opened 2 of the major, leaving 2♦ as Multi. The difference is in two suited hands you have to identify two features (the two suits) while in Multi there is only one (the major). Responder needs better than an opening hand to act strongly over the Wilkosz 2♦ opening, which negates most of its value.

Opener	Responder
2♦	?

2♥ - asks opener to pass with 5 hearts, else to bid 2♠

2♠ - asks opener to pass with spades, or to show his minor with hearts (i.e. 2♠ response guarantees a heart fit)

2NT - shows strong hand, asks for openers major, opener rebids

3♣ - clubs and a major, then 3♦ asks major

3♦ - diamonds and hearts

3♥ - shows both majors

3♠ - spades and diamonds

3♣ - long clubs, can be played as forcing but probably better is to play as signoff unless this is one of openers suits

3♦ - shows a fit for both majors, opener places contract.

4♣ - transfers to openers major

After 2 Major opening (weak two bid, 6-10 HCP)

Polish weak two bids follow normal rules of a decent six card suit, and of course deny a side five card suit since 2♦ is available for such hands. Any other restrictions are a matter of agreement.

Opener	Responder
2♥	?

2♠ - asks opener for singleton, 2NT rebid denies singleton, 3♥ rebid shows spade singleton

2NT - shows a spade suit and forcing values

3 new suit - natural and forcing.

Opener	Responder
2♠	?

2NT - asks singleton, opener rebids singleton or 3♠ with no singleton

3 new suit - forcing and natural

After 2NT opening (5+5+ minors, 6-10 HCP)

Responses are not covered in any notes to this bid, responder normally will bid his best minor at an appropriate level. My suggestion is to use responses of 4M as close out bids, and 3♠ as forcing. A response of 3♥ should be played as a strong hand with a minor fit, asking opener to clarify his major shape. Opener rebids 3♠ with short spades, 3NT with short hearts, then responders 4m is forcing and asks cue bid.

Slam Bidding

The main slam bidding tools are splinters (including self splinters), cue bidding (including advanced cue bids, generally in Italian style of cheapest high card control first??), Roman key card Blackwood (cheapest available non trump bid is king ask for total kings, no queen ask, this is called Hoyt), and the grand slam force (known in Europe as Josephine).

After interference of opening bids

Sputnik doubles are used through 3♠ after a 1 level opening and overcall. This means that doubles do not promise specific length in unbid majors, with the exception that 1♣ -1♦ -Double promises both majors. After 1♣ -1♦ or 1♥ overcall, double denies four spades. New suits at the 1 and 3 level are forcing, at the two level they are non forcing. A sputnik double followed by a new suit bid (where bidding that suit directly would have been at 2 level) is game forcing. After opponents preemptive jump overcall, 2NT is **Lebensohl** to make a competitive bid in a lower ranking suit.

After 1♣ -D, 1♦ response is natural, pass is negative.

Defensive Bidding

Bidding after an opponents opening follow standard American methods, with unusual no trump, Michaels cue bids, and preemptive jump overcalls. A 1NT overcall is 15-17 in direct seat, 12-15 in balance seat. After 1♣ (Polish)-Double-Pass, 1♦ is a negative response, others are natural with 6?+ HCP. Lebensohl is used after a double of opponents weak two bid.

Various methods are used in defense of opponents 1NT, most common is Jassem, a form of Cappalletti in which a double specifically shows a four card major and a five card minor. Advancer responds 2♣ to hear overcallers minor (pass or correct) or 2♦ to hear his major (advancer must have 4+ support for both majors).

Apparently there is no common special defense to a Polish 1♣ opening, I presume an overcall of 2♣ is played as natural rather than Michaels, but this is not clear.

Over opponents 1NT

Direct seat: Jassem

Dbl = 5m and 4M

2C = one suit 6+

2D = 4+-4+ in Majors

2H = hearts + minor

2S = spades + minor

Balance seat: Cappeletti

Dbl = 15+

2C = one suit 6+

2D = hearts and spades

2H = hearts and minor

2S = spades and minor

Leads

Leads of second or fourth best are played by most partnerships. This method is effectively Rusinow leads (top of touching honors), with top of interior sequence. Leading a spot card then playing a lower card on next play indicates an odd number of cards (3 or 5). Leading a spot card then playing higher on second round indicates an even number of cards (2 or 4). This method requires leading your lowest card from a doubleton, presumably with Qx, Kx, or Ax you lead the highest instead to avoid a blockage. There are several cases from world championship play where doubleton leads were misinterpreted, so I can only believe there are real problems with this method. Also 2/4 leads require the lead of the 9 or 10 from holding such as K9x or Q10x, this is technically unsound, presumably this is another exception where the lead would be either top or low according to the bidding.

My own experience suggests that 2/4 leads can be hard for declarer to read also, they certainly need an adjustment in thinking!

Nasz System (commonly abbreviated as NS)

This variation on the Polish club is similar to WJ2000. The main difference is

1. 1 of a major opening is 11-21 HCP with 5+ suit. Hands with 18-21 HCP that would be opened 1♣ with a jump rebid in the major in WJ2000 are opened 1M in this variation.
2. A 1♣ opening followed by a jump rebid in a major in NS shows 16-21 HCP with 5 clubs and 4 cards in the major bid.
3. After 1♣ -1M-1NT, 2♣ is new minor with step responses

4. After 1♣ -1M-2NT, 3♣ is specialized asking bid
5. A 2M response to 1♣ shows a solid suit
6. After 1♣ -2♣ natural game force, opener rebids by steps to show strength and club support
7. After 1♦ -2♣, opener's 2♦ rebid is neutral, others are forcing with extras, jumps are splinters.
8. Forcing no trump is used over 1M opening, but limited to 10 HCP unless used to show 3 card limit raise.
9. A 2♠ response to 1♥ opening is 6-9 HCP with a fit for hearts and a singleton.

Jassem - Tuszynski, Styczen 2000 (known as JT)

This variation uses 2♣ as an Acol two bid in an unspecified suit. A 1♣ opening is either a minimum balanced hand, or 18+ balanced, or any hand with clubs. Responses to 1♣ are somewhat different than in WJ also, for example 2m response is forcing one round only. Opener has numerous special rebids after 1♣ -1M. A 1M opening is 11-21 HCP.

Strefa (played by Kwiecien - Pszczola and Poletylo - Wojcicki)

This variation is similar to JT. Opening bids of 4♣ or 4♦ are Namyats, 9 trick preempts in a major. Responses to 1M opening are similar to those in 2/1, with a forcing no trump response.

Polish like SAYC

The idea of using a forcing but not necessarily strong 1♣ opening is sound and allows you to make a 1♦ opening entirely natural. Some Italian pairs, notably Gabby Oliveri and Danny DeFalco play a variation of sayc that is similar in many ways to the Polish club.

1♣ - 2+ clubs, may be 12-14 or 18-19 balanced, without 4 diamonds. 1♦ response natural or weak (possible with flat 4-5 HCP hand), usually denies a major. Pass of 1♣ is possible but rare. 1♣ -1M-1NT-2♣ is new minor, 2♦ instead is non forcing.

1♦ - 4+ suit, may be balanced 12-14 or 18-19. Inverted raises. 2♣ response is relay.

1M - 5+ suit, 11-21 HCP. Limit raises, forcing 1NT, 2♣ response is artificial game force relay

1NT - 15-17 HCP, Stayman, Jacoby, 3m limit, 3M slamish in other major, 4m double Texas, 2♠ is side ask or both minors, 2NT is to sign off in a minor.

2♣ - 20+ HCP, responses of 2M show other major, 3m show other minor. 2♦ is waiting, then 2NT=20-21, 2♥ is Kokish, forcing 2♠, then 2NT is 24-25.

2♦ - weak two in a major, or 22-23 balanced

2M - 5 card suit with 4+ minor, 6-10 HCP

2NT - weak preempt in any suit.

3x - sound preempt.

When 2♣ is response to a suit opening, openers 2♦ rebid shows any minimum. Other rebids are usually natural and show 15+ HCP.

Benito Garrozzo also plays a version of standard with relays in which a 1♦ opening promises 4 cards in the suit and 1♣ may be short. Given the problems inherent in competitive auctions in standard methods after a 1♦ opening on 4432 shape, I believe this method to be superior to the better minor approach of SAYC or 2/1.

Summary and assessment

The numerous variations in the meaning of 1♣ and 2♣ openings in the Polish framework suggest that same and types when included in the 1♣ opening can present problems, particularly when the opponents compete. Strong points in all versions of Polish club are the 1♦ opening and the ability to assure showing 18-20 HCP balanced.

The responding structure to 1NT seems far from ideal to me, you may wish to substitute your own methods.

Responses to 1M opening also allow you to play more or less forcing sequences, according to what you find most comfortable. Most auctions will duplicate the results in standard methods.

The Precision style 2♣ opening is an effective weapon as long as it is played with a low upper limit of 14 or 15 HCP, otherwise there is some risk of missing a game when you pass 2♣ on a misfit.

The Wilkosz 2♦ opening with 55 hands seems wrong to me, these hands are better opened with 2M, reserving 2♦ as multi. Rapid preempt is needed on two suiters, and that is not possible.

The competitive tools used in Polish are adequate, particularly those after a suit opening and overcall using sputnik doubles and Lebensohl.

There is room for improvement in Polish defensive bidding, adding for example Leaping Michaels.

The use of 2/4 leads is theoretically unsound, since there are far too many exceptions where this principle must be ignored. The use of 1/3/5 leads provides the same degree of count information without requiring exceptions.

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