

# Forcing Bids

# Goals

- Understand which bids are forcing/non-forcing
- Understand when to make a forcing bid
- Learn some rules to guide your bidding when you're not sure

*Before you spend time learning new conventions, it's essential to know which bids in standard bidding are forcing or not*

# Basic assumptions

- Bidding system: 2-over-1 game force
- We'll assume only the most basic convention
  - Forcing NT (as part of two-over-one)
  - Stayman and transfers over 1NT openings
  - Jacoby 2NT
  - New-minor forcing
  - Drury

# Terminology overview: reverses

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1♠
P	2♦	P	?
♠	x		
♥	Axx		
♦	KQxx		
♣	AKQxx		

- Hand strength is 17+
- First suit bid is longer than the second

# Terminology overview: jump shifts

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1♥
P	2♠	P	?
♠	AKQx		
♥	x		
♦	Kxx		
♣	AKQxx		

- Hand strength is 19+
- First suit bid is longer than second
- Second bid is a *jump*

# What's forcing in an uncontested auction?

- General rules:
  - a new suit by an unpassed responder is forcing
  - once a game force is established, keep bidding until you reach game
- What specific types of bids are forcing?
  - A reverse by opener is a one-round force
  - A new suit after a suit has been agreed upon is forcing one round
  - Any bid after opener has jumped is forcing to game
  - A strong 2C opener is forcing to 2NT or 3M after double negative
  - A jump shift by opener is game forcing
  - Any bid after a game force has been established is game forcing
  - Conventional bids are forcing, and some also establish a game force

# Why is it important to know which bids are forcing?

- Bridge is a partnership game.
  - When you or your partner make a bid, it's important that you both have the same understanding of whether it's forcing or not
  - Passing a forcing bid can damage partnership trust and confidence in bidding
  - It's equally important to remember to *make* a forcing bid when you don't want to be passed

**Let's look at some examples**

# Rebids by opener after 1-level response

W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	1♠
P	?		
♠ Qxx			
♥ Kxx			
♦ KQxx			
♣ Jxx			

**Forcing.** Bid 1NT. You cannot pass; partner (responder) is unlimited.

Consider your rebid before you open – if you would be tempted to pass partner's response, then you probably shouldn't open

Forcing or not?



# Rebids by opener after 1-level response

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1NT
P	?		
♠	QJxx		
♥	Axxx		
♦	Kx		
♣	KJx		

**Not forcing.** Partner has limited his hand to less than 10 points, depending on your ranges. You aren't going to miss game. Pass.

Forcing or not?

# Rebids by opener after 1-level response

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1♦
P	?		
♠	Kxx		
♥	AKJx		
♦	x		
♣	AKQxx		

**Bid 2H.** You need to establish a game force, and partner can pass a 1H rebid. So you need to jump shift.

Your bid?

# 1-level rebids by responder

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1♥
P	1♠	P	?
♠	Kxx		
♥	QJxx		
♦	xxxx		
♣	xx		

Forcing or not?

**Not forcing.** Partner has limited his hand by not jump shifting, and this is the best spot. You should pass.

With a strong hand (19+ points), opener should bid 2S as his second bid.

# Rebids by opener after 1-level response

W	N	E	S
	1♠	P	1NT
P	?		
♠	AQJxx		
♥	Axx		
♦	Jx		
♣	xxx		

Forcing or not?

## Depends on system.

- 2-over-1, Forcing NT: This is 100% **forcing**. Your partner might have as much as an opening hand with three trump, and is counting on you to bid again.
- Standard American: Pass.

# Rebids by opener after 1-level response

W	N	E	S
	P	P	1♠
P	1NT	P	?
♠	AKJxx		
♥	Axx		
♦	Kxxx		
♣	x		

**Not forcing.** Partner is a passed hand, so you can pass. But.. You should take another bid. Your hand is great, and partner could have as much as 11 HCP if playing 2-over-1.

Forcing or not?

## 2-level rebids by opener

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1♠
P	2♣	P	?

**Not forcing.** Partner has limited his hand to about 15 HCP by not jumping.

Forcing or not?

## 2-level rebids by responder

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1♠
P	2♣	P	2♠
P	?		

Forcing or not?

**Not forcing.**

This bid shows 6 spades, and less than invitational values.

To force (as responder), bid a new suit instead of repeating your suit

## 3-level rebids by responder

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1♠
P	2♣	P	3♠
P	?		

**Not forcing.** This shows an invitational hand with six or more spades.

Forcing or not?



## 2-level rebids by opener

W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	1♥
P	2♣	P	?

**Not forcing.** Opener has limited his hand to about 17-18 HCP by not jumping.

Forcing or not?

## 2-level rebids by responder

W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	1♥
P	2♣	P	2♥
P	?		

  

♠	Kxx
♥	x
♦	AK10xx
♣	AKxx

Forcing or not?

**Not forcing.** Responder has limited his hand to less than invitational values.

It's tempting to venture one more bid because you have extras, but given the misfit, it might be better to pass.

## 2-level rebids by responder

W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	1♥
P	2♣	P	2♠
?			

  

♠	Kxx
♥	x
♦	AK10xx
♣	AKxx

Forcing or not?

**Forcing.** Responder has bid a new suit (which he might not have) and is still unlimited, so you should take another bid. What that bid should be is another question!

Some people play a convention called Fourth Suit Forcing to game, which creates a game force by bidding the fourth suit.

## 2-level rebids by opener

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1♥
P	2♦	P	?
♠	Kxx		
♥	QJxx		
♦	xxxx		
♣	xx		

Forcing or not?

### Forcing One Round.

Opener has reversed, showing a hand of 17+ points. Despite how drecky your hand is, you owe partner one more bid.

There are different ways to respond to reverses, so how you respond depends on your methods.

## 3-level jumps by opener

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1♠
P	3♣	P	?

**Not forcing, but highly invitational.** Partner has limited his hand to 16-17 HCP by not jump-shifting.

Forcing or not?

## 3-level responses by responder

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1♠
P	3♣	P	3♠
P	?		

Forcing or not?

**Forcing.** Responder, by bidding after the jump, has forced you to game. *Any bid by responder after opener jumps is forcing to game.*

(Conversely, the only call responder can make to not create a game force after the jump is PASS.)

# 2-over-1 auctions

W	N	E	S
	1♥	P	2♦
P	?		
♠ Kxx			
♥ AQJxx			
♦ Jx			
♣ Jxx			

**Game Forcing.** Your partner established a game force. You don't like your hand, but partner is unlimited. Bid 2NT to show a balanced minimum.

Forcing or not?

## 2-over-1 auctions: passed hand

**Depends!**

W	N	E	S
	P	P	1♥
P	2♣	P	?
♠	Kxx		
♥	AQJxx		
♦	J		
♣	Jxxx		

Forcing or not?

- If you play Drury, then 2 Clubs is a *conventional* bid and is **FORCING**, showing support for opener's suit + limit-raise values. You cannot pass. Bid 2H, denying interest in game.
- If you don't play Drury, then the bid is natural, so **PASS!** You have a good club fit and no interest in game.
- As opener or responder: remember whether you're playing Drury



# Jumps by responder

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	2♠
P	?		
♠	Kxx		
♥	AQJ		
♦	x		
♣	AKJxxx		

Forcing or not?

**Most likely *non*-forcing.**

- Playing weak jump-shifts, responder is showing ~5 points or less, and a six-card suit. You still may decide to invite or jump to game given your hand, but you don't have to bid.

- Playing strong jump-shifts, the bid would be 100% forcing, and in this case, you'd drive to slam

# Jumps by responder

W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	3♣
P	?		
♠	KQxx		
♥	Qxxx		
♦	KQx		
♣	xx		

Forcing or not?

**Depends on partnership agreement.**

Many people play this as **non-forcing**, showing an invitational hand with long clubs, probably looking for 3NT. With this minimum, you'll pass

Some may play this as a weak jump shift, but I like the above treatment better

# Jumps by responder

W	N	E	S
	1♠	P	3♣
P	?		

Forcing or not?

Depends on partnership agreement.

- It could show a weak jump shift, in which case, **non-forcing**.
- It could show an invitational hand with long clubs and fewer than 3 spades, looking for 3NT, in which case, **non-forcing**.
- For those playing Bergen raises, 3C is a *conventional* bid showing 4 spades and 7-9 HCP. This bid is **forcing to the level of 3S**.

# Jumps by responder

W	N	E	S
	1♠	P	4♣
P	?		

Forcing or not?

- This is a conventional **splinter** bid, showing shortness in clubs, with 4+ spades
- **Game forcing.** If your hand is nice, cue bid a control along the way

# Jumps by opener

W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	1♥
P	3♣	P	?

Forcing or not?

**Game Forcing.** Partner's hand promises 19+ points, and is forcing to game.

Since partner needs to establish a game force, he may not have a real club suit. For example:

xx Ax AKJxx AKx

# Jumps by opener

W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	1♠
P	2NT	P	?
♠	KQxx		
♥	Jxx		
♦	xxx		
♣	xxx		

**Non-forcing:** Opener is limited to 18-19 HCP. Your hand is flat and minimum, and you may decide to pass.

Remember, if you bid again, you're forcing your side to game.

Forcing or not?

# Response to jump by opener

W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	1♠
P	2NT	P	3♠
P	?		
♠ xx			
♥ AKxx			
♦ AQJxx			
♣ KJ			

Forcing or not?

**Forcing:** *Any bid by responder after opener jumps is forcing.\**  
 (The only non-forcing bid is pass.) In this auction, responder should have six spades.

\*There are other conventional treatments that allow you to get out below game in this auction

# Response to jump by opener

W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	1♠
P	3♦	P	3♠
P	?		

  

♠	Kx
♥	xx
♦	AKQxxx
♣	Axx

**Forcing:** Any response after opener jumps is forcing to game, even though the jump itself wasn't.

Responder is showing six spades, and a game force.

With this hand, you bid 4S.

Forcing or not?



# New suit after suit agreement

W	N	E	S
	1♠	P	2♠
P	3♥	P	?
♠	953		
♥	K972		
♦	K104		
♣	1087		

Forcing or not?

- **Forcing:** Opener has extras and is asking for help to get to game. Your choices are:
  - 3S, sign off
  - 4H, choice of games
  - 4S, game
- But, you cannot pass. Opener may not have a real heart suit

# Bids can change with conventions

- A *conventional* bid is an artificial bid which differs from its natural meaning.
- Conventional bids are **forcing**
- The existence of conventional bids *can change whether some bids are forcing or not.*
- Let's look at bidding after 1NT response by opener in three cases:
  - Natural
  - Use New Minor Forcing
  - Use XYZ

# Bidding after 1NT response by opener

W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	1♠
P	1NT	P	2♣
P	?		

Forcing or not?

- If you don't play any conventional treatments over 1NT
- Then, new lower-ranking suit bids over 1NT are *non-forcing*; responder must jump or reverse to create a force
- **Pass or correct**

# Bidding after 1NT response by opener

## New Minor Forcing

W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	1♠
P	1NT	P	2♣
P	?		

Forcing or not?

- How can you establish a force in this situation? New Minor Forcing, or one of its variants is very useful.
- Responder's rebid of 2C is artificial and **forcing**, asking opener to further describe major suits:
  - Bid 2D or 2NT lacking a four-card heart suit or a 3-card spade support
  - Bid 2H with a four-card heart suit
  - Bid 2S with 3-card spade support

# Bidding after 1NT response by opener

W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	1♠
P	1NT	P	2♦
P	?		

- **Non-forcing.** Responder has failed to make a forcing bid of a new suit, and has limited his hand, so you can pass.

Forcing or not?

# Bidding after 1NT response by opener

W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	1♠
P	1NT	P	2♥
P	?		

Forcing or not?

- **Non-forcing.** Pass or correct.
- Another way to think of it: responder could have bid 2C to use New-Minor Forcing to force you to bid again.
- *Negative inferences are important: what partner didn't bid is as important as what he did bid*

# XYZ

W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	1♠
P	1NT	P	2♦
P	?		

Forcing or not?

- **Game forcing.** Pass at your peril! The 2D bid has established a game force, and you should continue to describe your hand further.

# Establishing a game force

- Some times you would like to establish a game force. Conventions exist to allow you to do that in a variety of situations.
  - 2-over-1
  - 4<sup>th</sup>-suit forcing
  - XYZ and Two-Way New Minor Forcing
  - Splinters
- Once a game force is established, you cannot pass below the level of game



# Bidding after preempts

W	N	E	S
	2♥	P	2♠
P	?		

Forcing or not?

- Depends:

	DESCRIBE	RESPONSES/REBIDS
2♣ _____ to _____ HCP Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> 2♦ Resp: Neg <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting <input type="checkbox"/>	strong, ART	
2♦ _____ 5 to 10 HCP Natural: Weak <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Conv. <input type="checkbox"/>		Feature 2NT Force <input type="checkbox"/> New Suit NF <input type="checkbox"/>
2♥ _____ 5 to 10 HCP Natural: Weak <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Conv. <input type="checkbox"/>		Feature 2NT Force <input type="checkbox"/> New Suit NF <input type="checkbox"/>
2♠ _____ 5 to 10 HCP Natural: Weak <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Conv. <input type="checkbox"/>		Feature 2NT Force <input type="checkbox"/> New Suit NF <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>OTHER CONV. CALLS:</b> New Minor Forcing: <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Way NMF <input type="checkbox"/>		
Weak Jump Shifts: In Comp. <input type="checkbox"/> Not in Comp. <input type="checkbox"/>		
4th Suit Forcing: 1 Rd. <input type="checkbox"/> Game <input type="checkbox"/> Unusual vs Unusual		

- Recommend **FORCING**
  - Pass if no fit
  - More important to be able to bid constructively

# Balancing in competition

- Sometimes it's right to balance, other times it's not. Let's take a look.

# What would you do?

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1♠
P	P	?	
♠	Qxx		
♥	KJxx		
♦	Jxx		
♣	xxx		

- **PASS.** Opener has passed a forcing bid. Responder (S) is unlimited. Don't balance them into game!

Matchpoints, your bid

# What would you do?

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1♠
P	2♦	P	P
?			
♠ Qxx			
♥ AQxxx			
♦ Jxx			
♣ xx			

- **PASS.** Responder has passed a forcing bid. Opener has reversed, and responder has passed. Don't balance them into game!

Your bid?

# General principle

- In pass-out seat, if your left-hand opponent made a forcing bid and your right-hand opponent passed, then:

**PASS!**

# Summary of forcing bids

- General rules:
  - a new suit by an unpassed responder is forcing
  - once a game force is established, keep bidding until you reach game
- What specific types of bids are forcing?
  - A reverse by opener is forcing one round
  - A new suit after a suit has been agreed upon is forcing one round
  - Any bid after opener has jumped is game forcing
  - A strong 2C opener is forcing to 2NT or 3M after double negative
  - A jump shift by opener is game forcing
  - Any bid after a game force has been established is forcing
  - Conventional bids are forcing, and may also establish a game force