

New Minor Forcing

New Minor Forcing originated in two earlier conventions which had a similar purpose. They are Checkback Stayman (used in North America) and Crowhurst (popular in U.K.).

In some bidding auctions, the opener will often rebid 1NT to indicate a range of 12-14 high card points and that both partners have still not found a fit in any suit. A minimum/maximum range of 12-14 high card points indicates that the partnership generally opens a strong No Trump of 15-17 high card points.

Playing New Minor Forcing (NMF) a bid of a previously unbid minor suit over a 1NT rebid is artificial and asks opener to describe his hand further

Partner	You
1♣	1♥ or 1♠
1NT	?

2♦ would be artificial, while 2♣ is to play.

What do you need to use NMF?

You should have a minimum of 11 HCP (game invitational values). The most common reason for NMF is that you have a five-card major and would like to know if partner has three-card support.

♠ AK853 ♥ K64 ♦ 84 ♣ A83

Partner	You
1♣	1♠
1NT	?

Playing NMF you bid the unbid minor, and he will tell you. In the above example, you want to be in game, but you need to have more information to find out where. However, if you had only 11 HCP (Take away the K of ♥.), your partner's rebid can also define the strength of his minimum hand. He will jump for his response with 14, a maximum minimum and bid normally with 12 or 13.

Can you use NMF when you have both majors?

Hands with five spades and four hearts can bid much more accurately with NMF.

♠ AK853 ♥ KJ64 ♦ 84 ♣ K3

Partner	You
1♣	1♠
1NT	?

Playing NMF, you start by bidding 2♦, your artificial forcing bid. If he has four hearts, he will tell you about them. If he does not, you never need to bid the suit. As a result, when you jump to 3♥ in this auction, rather than using NMF, you guarantee a five-card heart suit. With a weak hand, you would just bid 2♥, which promises only four hearts.

What if both minors are unbid?

There is only one auction for this:

♠ AJ864 ♥ Q6 ♦ KJ6 ♣ 963

Partner	You
1♥	1♠
1NT	?

Treat a bid of either minor as semi-artificial and forcing for one round. Bid your better minor (usually the minor in which you have a stopper)—on this hand bid 2♦. (*Note: Some players play that 2♦ is always diamonds in this sequence, while 2♣ is always NMF.*)

What do you do when partner uses NMF?

You have opened the bidding and rebid 1NT. Partner now uses NMF. Here is what you do in order of priority:

1. Show an unbid 4-card major.

This can only be hearts. If you had four spades, you would have rebid 1♠ rather than 1NT. You will often have four hearts when you open a minor and rebid 1NT over partner's 1♠ response. Remember, partner could have 4 hearts for his NMF bid. If he had a weak hand with 4+ hearts, he would simply bid his hearts.

♠ K3 ♥ KJ85 ♦ AJ84 ♣ Q84

You	Partner
1D	1♠
1NT	2♣
?	

How many hearts do you bid? You make a minimum bid with 12-13 and jump with 14. The hand above would jump to 3♥.

2. Support partner's suit if you can.

♠ K75 ♥ A62 ♦ KJ84 ♣ K84

You	Partner
1♦	1♠
1NT	2♣
?	

You do not have four hearts, so you can ignore Priority 1. So show partner your spade support. You are maximum, so bid 3♠. With the same shape and minimum, you would bid 2♠. (*Note: If you had support for partner's spades AND four hearts, bid your hearts. 4-4 fits generally play better than 5-3 fits. If partner used NMF without the heart suit, you can tell your partner about your spades later. This priority is clearly by partnership agreement. You will find about half the players who use this convention prefer the immediate support of spades and the other half prefer the heart bid. Talk this over with your partner.*)

3. Show your range.

If you do not have an unbid heart suit and cannot support partner, the only thing left to show is your range—minimum or maximum.

You	Partner
1♦	1♠
1NT	2♣
?	

2NT: Minimum with no 4-card heart suit or 3-card spade suit; stoppers in clubs and hearts

2♦: Minimum with no 4-card heart suit or 3-card spade suit; no stopper in one of unbid suits

3NT: Maximum with no 4-card heart suit or 3-card spade suit; stopper in clubs and hearts

3♣: Maximum with no 4-card heart suit or 3-card spade suit; stopper in suit bid, but not in hearts

3♦: Maximum with no 4-card heart suit or 3-card spade suit; stopper in hearts, but not in clubs

What do you do when you don't have enough to invite to game?

♠ KQ863 ♥ Q1083 ♦ 85 ♣ 72

Partner	You
1♣	1♠
1NT	?

Just bid 2♥. This tells your partner you are at least 5-4 in the majors, but it also tells him you have no interest in game. He may pass 2♥ or bid 2♠.

What if my second suit is an unbid minor?

♠ K1063 ♥ 84 ♦ 9 ♣ QJ9753

Partner	You
1♦	1♠
1NT	?

You are fairly sure that clubs will play better than no-trump. You do not have the values to invite to game and if using NMF, you may not bid 2♣ without telling your partner you have a better hand. The solution is to jump to 3♣. Since you are using 2♣ as your forcing bid, 3♣ is not forcing, and partner should pass.

In Summary

1. A bid of an unbid minor after a 1NT rebid is artificial and guarantees at least invitation values. Opener describes his hand in terms of shape and strength.
2. When both minors are unbid, bid your stronger minor as NMF.
3. A jump by responder in an unbid minor after a 1NT rebid is weak and to play.
4. Over NMF, opener shows an unbid 4-card heart suit first.
5. Failing that, opener shows 3-card support for partner's suit.
6. If neither 4 nor 5 can be done, opener bids NT, rebids his suit, or shows stoppers (with a maximum).

The information above is based on the system used in the book *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know* -- by Barbara Seagram, Marc Smith. You will find other ways of using this bid, so it is best to discuss responses to NMF with your partner.