



# Adventures in Bridge

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## *This Week in Bridge*

### **(9) 2 over 1 Game Forcing: Modern Bridge Standard**

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Level: 1

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#### **Introduction to 2/1 Game Forcing Bids**

2 Over 1 Game Forcing (2/1 GF) bids are the core of a modern approach to bidding. The primary idea is that when partner opens at the 1-level and we bid a new suit at the 2-level (not including jump shifts), this is a game forcing bid – meaning neither Opener nor Responder can pass below game. This allows both players to confidently describe their hands – knowing that all their bids are forcing and they won't get "dropped" before reaching game.

#### **2/1 Game Forcing Bids**

- 1♠ - 2♣
- 1♠ - 2♦
- 1♠ - 2♥
- 1♥ - 2♦
- 1♥ - 2♣
- 1♦ - 2♣

These are all of the 2/1 Game Forcing bids.

After our auction begins with a 2/1 Game Forcing bid we change our perspective on the rest of the auction. We know that we are going to bid game, so we want to focus on a few new questions:

- Which game are we going to play – 4-Major, 3NT, or 5-minor?
- Are we going beyond game (to slam?)

#### **Basics of 1NT Forcing**

In *Standard American* bidding, we respond 1NT to 1-Major with 6-9 pts and bid at the 2-level with 10+ pts. Now that we play 2/1 bids as Game Forcing (showing 12+ pts) we need to figure out what to do with the 10-11 pts hands that we used to respond with at the 2-level. These hands are not good enough to respond with at the 2-level - so we will need to bid 1NT with them as well. This new "wide-ranging" 1NT response (6-9 or 10-11 pts) is called *1NT Forcing*. Using 1NT Forcing we expect Opener to bid after our 1NT response (thus the name 1NT Forcing) and we will further describe our hand with our second bid.



*Note: It is also possible to play 1NT Semi-Forcing, which is similar to 1NT Forcing except that the Opener can pass 1NT with a balanced minimum (12-13 pts) opening bid.*

### **Responding to 1♠**

When we make a 2/1 GF bid we generally want to have a 5c suit to bid at the 2-level. But when we don't have a 5-card suit and we do have 12+ HCP, we still want to make a game forcing bid. To solve this problem, we lessen our requirements for a 2/1 bid in a minor. We can bid 2-minor with only a 4-card suit, but bidding 2♥ promises a 5-card suit.

*Note: This is a good general rule in all of bridge – “If you are going to lie, lie in a minor!”*

- 1♠ - 2♣ usually 4+card ♣ suit, 12+ HCP
- 1♠ - 2♦ 4+card ♦ suit, 12+ HCP
- 1♠ - 2♥ 5+card ♥ suit, 12+ HCP

*Note: With 3-4-3-3 and 12+ pts we must lie and bid 2♣ (though we know we are going to play in ♠ since we have at least a 5-3 fit.)*

### **Responding to 1♥**

When we have a game forcing hand (12+ pts) we strive to make a 2/1 GF bid as often as possible. If we have a 4-card ♠ suit and a 4-card minor, we will often choose to make the 2/1 GF bid (bid the minor instead of responding 1♠.) Once we have established a game forcing auction we will be able to find a 4-4 ♠ fit if we have one.

One hand where we don't make a 2/1 GF bid even when we have 12+ pts is when we have a 5+c♠ suit. We must respond 1♠ to a 1♥ opening bid and subsequently make forcing bids to try to find our ♠ fit. Making a 2/1 GF bid into another suit will make it hard to find a ♠ fit because partner will never think that we have a 5-card ♠ suit.

### **When Don't We Make a 2/1 GF Bid with a GF Hand?**

There are only a few hands where we have 12+ HCP and do not make a 2/1 GF bid. These are hands that can be described in one call or have other conventional tools available. Some examples of these hands would use *Jacoby 2NT, Splinters, or 3NT – choice of game bids.*



## Conclusion

Most players think that playing 2/1 Game Forcing is a “big change” from Standard American bidding, but this is generally not the case. By adjusting the beginning of your auctions, making 2-level bids stronger and 1NT a little wider ranging, you can simplify much of the future bidding because both you and partner are assured that the auction cannot stop below game. Try making this change to your system and you will see that in a little while it will feel simple and natural and you will not remember what was what like before you played 2/1 Game Forcing.