

# Say Good-Bye to the Forcing 1NT\* Bid?

## Provided By Neil H. Timm

A significant number of duplicate bridge players play the 2/1 Game Force System or Precision where the common response to a major suit opening bid with 7-12 dummy points and  $\leq 2$ -card support for the major is to bid 1NT\* as either Forcing, Semi-forcing or some Hybrid which depends on the major suit bid (e.g. over 1♠ forcing and over 1♥ semi-forcing).

**1NT\* forcing is fast becoming the “NON-STANDARD” because a 5-2 fit will only do better than 1NT when dummy provides fast ruffing values or if the opponents can run a long suit. Otherwise 1NT is a much better contract!**

An alternative to the 1NT\* forcing response is called the Two-Club Marionette Convention suggested by Allan DeSerpa (2017), “The Two-Club Marionette Good-bye Forcing Notrump”, DeSerpa Publications.

### The Basic Two-Club Marionette Convention

Over a bid of a major suit by the opener, responder is required to make the artificial bid of two-clubs; however with a 3352 had and between 0-9HCP, responder may pass. So, the bid is very much like the semi-forcing 1NT\* bid. With 10-12, responder makes the bid of 2♣\* announced as semi-forcing.

Most of the time the opener is required to make the relay bid of 2♦\* which is alerted by responder; however, if opener **DOES NOT bid 2♦\***, a rebid of the major is made which denies game interest with 11-12HCP. The bidding sequences are then:

(1) 1♥ - 2♣\* - 2♥ - ? Where  $\Rightarrow$  command puppet relay to next bid

Rebids	2+ ♥	Short ♥'s
Limit Raise	Pass	
Game Force	2NT $\Rightarrow$ 3♣	2NT $\Rightarrow$ 3♣
Balanced Invitational	Pass	Pass
6-card Invitational	2♠ $\Rightarrow$ 2NT	3♣/3♦
Forcing Raise	3♥/4♥	
Strong Preempt	4♥	

(2) 1♠ - 2♣\* - 2♠ -? Where ⇒ command puppet relay to next bid

Rebids	2+ ♠	Short ♠'s
Limit Raise	Pass	
Game Force	2NT⇒3♣	2NT⇒3♣
Balanced Invitational	Pass	Pass
6-card Invitational	2NT⇒3♣	3♣/3♦/3♥
Forcing Raise	3♠/4♠	
Strong Preempt	4♠	

### Other Basic Exceptions (suggested by Timm)

(1) If you play the Two-club Marionette or the Two-Way Nebulous 2♣\* Convention with ambiguous splinters, responder with 13+dummy points and a singleton somewhere may not bid 2♣\*, but bid:

1♠ - pass - 3♥\* (singleton somewhere) – to ask where, bid next step (3♠)

Then 4♥ - 4♣ - 4♦ show singletons (direct bids) – or some may prefer use submarine-like bids 3NT\*=♣, 4♣\*=♦, and 4♦\*=♥ to avoid a double.

1♥ - pass - 3♠\* (singleton somewhere) – to ask where, bid next step (3NT)

Then 4♣ - 4♦ show singletons and 4♥= spades (singleton) – or again you may use submarine- like bids 4♥=♠, 4♣\*=♦, and 4♦\*=♥ to avoid a double.

### Voids

1♠ - pass - 4♣\*/4♦\* (void in suit bid) and 3NT\* = heart void.

1♥ - pass - 4♣\*/4♦\* (voids in suit bid) and 3NT\* = spade void

(2) If you play the Kaplan Inversion/Interchange Convention

Be careful there are several versions of this convention; DeSerpa (2017) calls it Puppet Kaplan. The basic reason for the convention is to allow opener to play in 1NT with 0-4 spades and a bad hand (0-9HCP).

(3) The Marionette Convention is off over interference

(4) Play that it is off with any convention with 4+ card support and 12+HCP (e.g. Jacoby 2NT\*) or conventions with 10-12 Dummy points and 4-card support (e.g. the Reverse Bergen bid of 3♣\* or Bergen bid of 3♦\*).

DeSerpa (2017) only recommends that it be OFF with interference since he suggests conventions like Puppet Kaplan, Piggyback relays and Piggyback power bids, Sixpack, midi-splinters and fit bids.

The normal sequences of bids are:

**1♥/1♠ - 2♣\* → 2♦\* (artificial and forcing) -? Where → denotes a requested relay**

2♥/2♠ = 3-card support 10-12 dummy points

2oM = (two of the other major) artificial. Shows an unbalanced hand with 5+ clubs

2NT = natural, balanced invitational (10-12HCP)

3♣ = 6+clubs, game invitational

3♦ = 6+diamonds, game invitational

3♥/3♠ = 10+HCP forcing raise with 3-card support and clubs

3NT = balanced 13-15 and 2-card support for the bid major

4♥/4♠ = strong preempt

### Basic Marionette opener rebid rules after responder's 2♦\* bid

After an opening 1♠ opener ALWAYS rebids 2♥ (Forcing and unlimited)

After an opening 1♥ a rebid of 2♠=17+ (a reverse bid)

A bid of 2NT=18-19 shows 5332 shape and a doubleton club

All bids after responder's 2NT bid are weak and descriptive

3M = natural and 6+card major, over 2NT/3NT

### Artificial game Force: Opener's Rebid

Rebids	1♥ - 2♣* → 2♦* - 2♠	1♠ - 2♣* → 2♦* - 2♥
2♠		6-card suit
2NT→3♣	Club raise denies major shortness	Club raise denies major shortness
3♣ → 3♦	Diamonds	Diamonds
3♦	6-card suit	
3♥	Balanced 12-14	Balanced 12-14
3♠	Short Spades**	Short Hearts
3NT	Balance 18-19 short clubs	Balance 18-19 short clubs

\*\* Unless opener needs the natural spade bid

Higher bids by opener over responder's bid of 2NT or higher are natural; the rebid of 2NT may contain a singleton in opener's major. The forcing raises of 3M are designed to be slam-oriented since responder may raise opener's suit after showing a club suit.

Let's now look at a few examples.

Opener	Responder
♠AK876	♠Q
♥A2	♥K10543
♦753	♦Q8943
♣Q107	♣75

Opener has 14 starting points and Responder has 8 starting points. Playing 1NT\* forcing the bidding goes:

Opener	Responder
1♠	1NT*
2♣	2♥
Pass	Pass

Playing Two-Club Marionette, responder has less than 10HCP and responder would pass. If responder forgot, it would go 1♠ -2♣\* → 2♦ - Pass.

Both 1NT or 2♦ make for a score of 90 while those playing 1NT\* as forcing in either 2♥/2♠ spades go down one which happen over 60% of the time. Is it time to change?

Opener	Responder
♠76	♠A
♥KQ765	♥A3
♦Q53	♦J10942
♣AJ9	♣K8743

Opener has 13 starting points and responder has 14. Playing 1NT forcing the bidding may go:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1NT*
2♣	2♦
3♣	Pass

Playing the Kaplan interchange one may bid:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠* (less than 4-spades)
1NT	2♣ Relay with 8+
2♦*	Pass

Instead of passing 2♦\* some may bid 2NT\* to show 5-5 and opener would bid 3♣/3♦.

Not playing Kaplan some may bid:

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♣*
2♦	3♦
Pass	Pass

As it turns out 3♦ makes 4 and 3♣ makes only 3.

The last example is Deal B.6 in DeSerpa (2017, p.79) where the total HCP=25, but recall 13-SST is 2 = 11 tricks with 19-21 working points and add 1 for 22-24 implies 12, in the slam zone.

Opener	Responder
♠AJ10974	♠3
♥Q7	♥AK107
♦J	♦1083
♣AJ107	♣KQ763

Playing 1NT\* forcing did you get to the 6♣ slam?

The bidding using the Two-Club Marionette Convention is:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣*
2♠	2NT⇒3♣
3♣*	3♥ heart invitational bid
4♦*(interest)	4♥
4♥ (Spades better)	6♣
Pass	Pass

Some bridge players use the Two-Way Nebulous 2♣\* **forcing response** with 10+ HCP and 1NT as semi-forcing with 0-9 HCP for handling strong balanced hands facing a 1♥/1♠ opening. The bids for the Two-Way Nebulous 2♣\* approach also begin with a forced relay to 2♦\* (for examples and an in depth analysis of the system go to <http://bridgewinners.com/article/print/better-21-bidding-the-nebulous-2c-bid> ---Andrew Gumperz's article ---the idea was invented by Eddie Wold). A review is provided on the site: [www.bridgewebs.com/Ocala](http://www.bridgewebs.com/Ocala) under Timm's Bridge Bits.