

A survey by Steve Moese

Overview

Here is a standard framework for discussion (*Subscripts O=Opener, R=Responder, C=OverCaller, A= Advancer*):

1 NT_R [*Not forcing in competition*]

5-9 HCP no fit for opener's major (*7-9 for forcing club bidders*)

10-12 HCP no fit for opener's major

10-12 HCP & 3 card Limit Raise

Opener's Rebids (*11-15 for forcing club bidders*)

Simple 2-level new suit rebid: 12-17 HCP 3+ card fragment (2+ clubs if 1♥_O-1NT_R-2♣_O).

Rebid 2 Major: 12-17 HCP 6+ trumps

Bidding after Responder's 2nd bid: 15-17 HCP Invitational (except when 2nd suit rebid)

Rebidding opener's 2nd suit 12-14 HCP Distribution, not extra strength.

2NT_O 18-19 HCP Balanced

Jump Shifts: 18-21 HCP Natural

1♥_O-1NT_R-2♠_O Reverse: 18-21 HCP Natural

Jump Rebid major: 18-21 HCP 6+ trumps

3NT_O 19-21 HCP Solid Major suit

4 Opener's Major Strength or distribution for game opposite any 5 HCP

Responder's Rebids

Simple new suit 2 level rebid: 5-9 HCP 5+ Cards discourages; Intended to play.

Simple Preference to opener's major 5-9 HCP on all 2 card holdings.

2NT_R 10-12 HCP 1-2 cards in partner's major, invites game.

New suit at 3 level: 10-12 HCP 6+ cards invitation with 0/1 in opener's major

Delayed major jump raise: 10-12 HCP 3 card limit raise (typically balanced).

Delayed jump shifts 10-12 HCP 3 card limit raise 0/1 mini splinters.

Alternative: extra long suit capable of playing opposite void.

3NT_R 10-12 HCP Gambling 7+ Solid Minor

What does 1NT Forcing mean?

Where does this come from? Is this a good/bad idea? What do the experts say? All great questions.

Learning to play rubber bridge or party bridge you might never have heard of this bidding convention. Even its name

can seem superficially silly – one of the first conventions we learn is to bid 1 NT with a weak hand no fit and no interest in a major. Forcing? Let's take a look and 1NT Forcing and the context where it's used.

As with any convention there are many possible treatments. This outlines the style where 2/1 is immediately forcing to game. Known variants are outlined for discussion. We recommend www.bridgeworld.com and the Bridge World Standard Poll for a detailed discussion of the expert consensus on this and many other conventions. As with all conventions, be sure to understand how conventional bids affect other bids and inferences available to your partnership.

We'll retrace history and include bidding system developments to see 1 NT Forcing and how this useful convention came to be. Remember, responder's most important mission is to raise with support immediately. In a few cases we delay raising partner's suit one bid to gain precision in communicating strength or trump length.

This conversation aims at standard and 2/1 Game Force bidding. Forcing club users should adjust bidding strength accordingly. Note, using limited opening bids allows certain sequences reserved for 15-17 HCP hands in standard or 2/1 to show distributional patterns for 11-15 HCP hands more exactly.

Standard Bidding and the 1NT Response

In standard bidding (Goren, Standard American, SAYC, Acol, others) the response of 1NT to a 1 level opening bid to show a weak, somewhat discouraging hand:

- 5+ to 9+ HCP. HCP ranges 5-9 or 6-10 are common (and some as few as 4 HCP!!).
- denies support for opener's major,
- denies the ability to bid a 4 card major up the line (except responder can have 4 hearts and respond 1NT_R to 1♠_O).
- denies the ability to raise partner's major suit, and
- is not forcing.

Opener can pass with a minimum balanced hand or bid a nonforcing 2nd suit at the 2-level trying to improve the likelihood of a positive score. The 1NT response lets us stop at the 1-level with weak misfit hands, while keeping open the opportunity to bid on with more strength or shape.

What does responder do with 5+ to 12- HCP (*some of my partners would say 4/5 to 11/12 HCP*)?

Standard bidding says to raise partner when you have a fit (3 cards for opener's major and 4 cards for opener's minor) and 6-9 HCP. When you don't have a fit, bid 1NT with 6-9 HCP. This leaves the 10-11 point hands having to bid something else.

In standard bidding, a Two-over-One (2/1) bid shows the suit bid and at least 10 HCP. The 2/1 bid is encouraging. Jump shifts began as game forcing bids that enabled slam investigation. This meant partner's 2/1 bid was limited to roughly 10 to 18 or 19 HCP, just under the strong jump shift.

However tournament players learned that this approach adds an extra level of bidding to reach agreement on both game strength and fit. Finding a fit and game force at the 2-level would enable us to search more effectively for best game strain and slam possibilities. In fact players found that Jump Shifts coupled with a few helpful forcing tools also add unnecessary layers to the auction.

Jeff Rubens (November 1980-April 1981 Bridge World) formalized the *useful space principle* and expanded this thinking to many areas of bidding theory. One corollary of useful space is FAST ARRIVAL (think *slow shows fast denies*). Fast arrival indicates relative weakness or disinterest by bidding game **immediately** in a game forcing auction. By using up the extra bidding space in one step, we send the message that we are not interested in exploring further – we are at our minimum and partner needs an extraordinary hand to continue further. With **extra strength** we cue bid at low levels using the extra space available in the auction to understand pattern and suit controls. This additional information should allow us to judge when slam is viable. Not every expert agrees with fast arrival. Some prefer to use a jump to game as extra strength or as a picture jump - game values with an absence of controls (Aces and Kings) in the 2 unbid suits. Ken Rexford codified cue bidding in a system that proposes a jump to game after a 2/1 response shows specifically a double splinter in the two unbid suits!

Another corollary is to make low bids forcing to game, eliminating the need for strong jump bids. 1NT Forcing is best understood in the context of 2/1 Game Force. The ultimate goal is to leave maximum bidding space for those auctions where the additional space will yield useful precision and higher scores.

Bidding Axiom: explore wisely for best fit before deciding on game, and for game before looking for slam.

2/1 Game Force

The bidding approach we call 2/1 Game Force is so common in duplicate bridge it's almost today's *de facto* standard approach in North America. 2/1 Game Force enables finding a fit and game strength after

only 4 bids and often at the 2-level. The system name derives from assigning game going strength to a simple (lower ranking) new suit bid at the two level over opener's 1♦, 1♥, or 1♠ opening bid with no competitive bidding. Game force simply means that both partners have at least an opening hand in strength and distribution. A 2/1 bid shows a minimum of 12 HCP.

1♦	Pass	2♣*
1♥	Pass	2♣
1♥	Pass	2♦
1♠	Pass	2♣
1♠	Pass	2♦
1♠	Pass	2♥

There are only 6 possibilities! We exclude jump bids from this conversation.

*Note that 2♣ over partner's 1♦ opening can be a special case. Not everybody plays this as a game force. Some play this as Game Forcing unless Rebid. (If responder rebids 3♣, then s/he shows a 10-11 HCP hand with a good club suit. Responder's 3♣ rebid is not forcing). We have this special case because by agreement, 1NT over partner's 1♦ opening is 6-9/10 HCP and not forcing.

Bidding Axiom: Opening hands facing each other will produce at least a game (or 10 tricks in a minor). This assumes a good fit, and that opponents can't run setting tricks at the opening lead (controls).

Tournament players know that opponents strain to compete today more than ever. Telling partner we are strong enough for game or not in one bid is a decided advantage and improves our competitive bidding decisions. Partner's 1NT or 2/1 Game Force response reduces uncertainty about game prospects. Since responder's game strength is better defined by the first bid, we have better information to use when making tight competitive bidding judgments.

Bridge World Standard 2001

Go to www.bridgeworld.com and look at the Bridge World Standard Poll results. You'll find the following preferences:

After partner's 1 of a major opening bid, a 1NT response should be...	Expert %	Reader %	A 2 over 1 response to an opening 1 of a suit bid should be treated as...	Expert %	Reader %
Truly Forcing	42	44	Forcing to Game	30	23
Semi-forcing (Limited to Game Invitational Strength)	58	56	Forcing to Game except where responder rebids their suit simply after opener has not promised extra values	52	66
			Creating a force level not described in either case above	18	11

1NT semi-forcing is a treatment that allows opener to pass the 1 NT bid with any hand that would NOT accept a limit raise in the opener's major suit. This allows the opening side to play at the 1 level when it could be the last chance for a plus score.

1NT Forcing Treatments

There are many possible treatments for 1NT Forcing. Here are a few of the approaches. The idea here is to see how your choice of 1NT treatment can impact other parts of your major suit bidding agreements. You choose how to achieve the communication style you prefer.

Of course it's too complicated to comprehensively explore the possibilities for all the options shown here. The remaining discussion in this article assumes the choice of the 5-12 HCP limited strength hand and a truly forcing 1NT bid by responder, including the so-called "bad" limit raise (balanced 3 card raise).

Yes, the semi-forcing approach reflects the plurality for experts. The extensions from the following conversation should be obvious and are left to you.

Style	HCP	Comments
1 NT Forcing <i>(the subsequent discussion assumes this approach)</i>	5-12	Alerts partner that game is unlikely if partner holds a minimum hand. The 5-12 range is useful to play forcing to differentiate weak preemptive raises from (borderline) constructive raises – raises through 1NT Forcing are weaker than those bid directly (1M-2M is stronger than 1M-1NT-2x-2M; 1M-4M is stronger than 1M-1NT-2x-4M. <i>Note: if 1NT is semi forcing you cannot effectively play a constructive single major raise.</i>
1 NT Forcing	5-15	Some include balanced hands with 13-15 HCP that are awkward to bid because the 2/1 call would imply a longer suit. Axx KQxx Kxx J10x opposite partner's 1 Spade opener would require a distorted 2♣ call on a 3 card suit to force game, or to use 3NT as a 3 card forcing raise on this type of hand. Change responder's hand to Ax KQxx Kxx J10xx and 3NT is no longer adequate but the 2/1 call could be in a (weak) 4 card ♣ suit. Using 5-15 HCP range enables your partnership to guarantee a 5 card minor when bidding 2/1 if you so choose. This also frees the 3NT call for other purposes (e.g. splinter raise Game Force with the short suit hidden unless opener is interested in slam). This treatment creates ambiguity for partner in return for better sense of hand shape. Marshall Miles is a proponent of this approach.
1 NT Semi Forcing	5-12	Allows opener to pass with certain hands (any 5332 or 4=5=2=2 minimums) that would not accept a limit raise. Tends to mean opener's 2 nd suit is real (4+ cards) or shows extra values (13+ HCP). Since opener does not guarantee a rebid, responder must take initial actions directly (raises, preempts) or risk playing in 1 NT.
1 NT Not Forcing	5-9	Standard American/Goren/SAYC.
1 NT Game Forcing	12+	Common with many relay systems (banned by the ACBL except for extended National and world Championship team play). Responder's 2 bids become negative 5-11 HCP implying no fit. See Groetheim, G. and A. Sontag, <u>The Viking Precision Club, A Relay System for the 21st Century</u> , Devlyn Press 2000, 256 pp. for more details.
1 NT Limit Raise or better	9+ w/fit 12+ otherwise	A modification to 1NT Game Forcing that is allowed by ACBL because it includes at least invitational hands for partner's suit. At a minimum the bid implies a hand no worse than a bad limit raise (Hardy's 3 card balanced 9+ to 12- HCP raise). Up to you how to handle 4 card forcing raises, splinters and other forcing hand types from here.

Many players use 1NT Forcing By Unpassed Hand. This choice recognizes that a passed hand cannot have a good hand, that 3rd or 4th hand partner might open light, and 1NT might be the right place to play. This approach couples best with some form of Drury (typically fit Drury) or Fit-Showing Invitational Jumps so your side can still reach game when right.

Responder's 1NT Forcing Bid

Over partner's 1 of a major opening, 1NT by responder is **forcing for one round** by an unpassed hand with no competitive interference. 1NT is never forcing if partner opens a minor or when bid over an opponent's 1-level overcall. Over opponents 1-level overcall 1NT shows 8-10 HCP, a stopper in the opponent's suit, and no fit for partner. We define no fit to mean 0, 1, or 2 cards in opener's major. However a doubleton honor in opener's major with top of range HCP might encourage a delayed raise.

We broaden the point range of the Forcing 1NT Response to include 5+ to 12- HCP hands. This adds misfit invitational hands (10 to 12- HCP) and 3-card support limit raise hands (10 to 12- HCP). 1NT

Forcing initially says we do not fit and we don't have game unless partner has more than 12-13 HCP. With the 3 card limit raise hand we jump raise partner or raise a rebid major to game.

We want stop bidding as soon as possible when we do not have game strength. We also want to make more space available to explore fit and level safely when we have game strength. If we can agree fit and game strength while still at the 2 level, then we can use the remaining space to explore best strain and whether slam is a possibility. This way we put the extra bidding space to more effective use. By putting 5+ to 12- HCP hands in 1NT Forcing we enable the 2/1 game force bids on 12+ HCP hands. 1NT can say stop bidding at the first playable spot unless we find a fit and we are at the top of our ranges.

Some examples:

<u>Opener</u>	<u>Overcaller</u>	<u>Responder</u>	<u>Advancer</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1♣	Pass	1NT	Pass	NOT FORCING! Typically shows 6-10 HCP and no 4 card major. (<i>Some play 8-10 HCP over 1♣</i>)
1♦	Pass	1NT	Pass	
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass	Forcing 1 Round. Denies 4 Spades
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass	Forcing 1 Round. 4 Hearts possible
1♣	1♠	1NT	Pass	Not forcing. Promises a ♠ stopper. About 8-10 HCP.
1♥	1♠	1NT	Pass	Not forcing. Promises a ♠ stopper. About 8-10 HCP.

1NT forcing is compatible with a 5-card major opening style. If we don't find a lower ranking 8-card fit at the 2 level, playing in a 5-2 major fit will likely equal or beat the result from 1NT on many hands. You can choose to use 1NT forcing when playing a 4 card major style, but this is rarely done. The natural rebids over 1NT in when using 4 card majors handles patterns reasonably well without the force.

Adding 3 card limit raise hands to 1NT Forcing bid allows the 2/1 bid to cleanly force to game.

Rebids by Opener

Wherever opener has 6 or more cards in their major they will rebid the major (jumping to show extra strength). Opener can choose to show a side 4 card suit then jump in the major to communicate a 6-4 patterns and 15-17 HCP.

Opener's likely distribution when opening one of a major is 5332, 5422, 5431, 5440, 5521/30, 6322, 6331, 6421/30, 6511/20, 6610, and all 7+ hands. Many hands will have a 4+ card side suit, and this is opener's preferred rebid. Opener will always give preference to rebidding a 6+ card suit, except with 15-17 HCP and 64 pattern. With this hand, opener rebids the minor then jumps to 3 of the major.

With 5-5 distribution and 12-14 HCP opener will rebid the 2nd 5 card suit twice. With 15-17 HCP and 5-5 distribution opener will rebid the major at the 2 level if possible. After responder's 3rd bid a rebid of the 2nd suit shows thee strong 5-5. (*See the Meckstroth Adjunct for a better way*).

Jump Shift the 1st rebid on big 5-5 hands (18-21 HCP). On big 18-21 HCP 6-4 hands opener has a choice (*see the Meckstroth Adjunct*). Certainly jumping immediately to 3 of the major is always available.

Opener will never rebid a 4 card suit at the 2 level holding a 6+ card major even in a stronger hand – the risk is too high partner will pass and the contract will be poor). There are 2 exceptions to rebidding a new suit with 4 cards at the 2 level. With a weak 5332 opener must bid a 3 card minor (or pass using the Semi Forcing approach discussed below). With 4♠5♥22 and 12 to 15 HCP, partner must rebid 2♣ conventionally. *Inform opponents this might be a 2 card suit*. This only occurs in one auction only: 1♥-1NT-2♣. Using 1NT Semi Forcing, opener would pass with 4522 and a minimum.

The 15-17 HCP hands for opener are handled by bidding as if holding 12-14 HCP, then bidding 2NT (if available) or rebidding the major even at the 2 level, or bidding a new suit. Opener's subsequent bid after responder's preference to the major (weak, nonforcing) invites game.

Rebids by Responder

In general, responder returns opener to the major suit holding any 2 cards and a minimum range 1NT response (5+ to 9- HCP). The auction will normally end there. The goal is usually to play in the safest 2 level contract when hands do not fit. If opener continues with 2 of the major, 2NT, a new suit at the 3 level, or 3 of the major, s/he shows a 15-17 HCP hand and invites game opposite a maximum for responder's bid (8-9 HCP).

Over opener's 2 of a major rebid (6+ cards, minimum HCP) responder can raise with 2 trump and 9-11 HCP (a 2 card limit raise), and bid 4 with 2 trump and 12 HCP or any 3 card limit raise hand (9+ to 12- HCP).

With a singleton or void in opener's major and a minimum hand (6-9 HCP), responder can bid a 5 card suit at the 2 level if possible or pass opener's rebid. If opener rebids in a minor, responder can safely pass with 4 card support and 0 or 1 of opener's major. Opener's rebid of 2 hearts after opening 1 spade always promises 4 or more hearts. Responder can pass with 3 hearts and a weak hand. If holding 3 hearts and a 6 card minor, opener can bid the minor at the 3 level denying both opener's major suits. Opener should pass this bid. The 3 level contract will be better whenever the minor suit trump length are tricks.

If opener has rebid the major at the 2 level responder should pass with any minimum including a void in partner's major. Responder should never correct the 2 level major suit contract to a 3 level minor suit contract with a minimum unless holding 8 or more trumps or a desire for a new partner.

Responder's three strong bids (9+ to 12- HCP) are all non-forcing: 2NT, a jump to 3 of a new suit, and a jump to 3 of opener's major. 2NT shows 10-11 (bad 12) balanced hand. Some allow responder to have a doubleton or singleton but never a void in opener's major. The jump to a minor denies as many as 2 cards in opener's major. The jump to opener's major is the 3 card limit raise.

This fits well in the major raise structure common to 2/1 Game Force. The direct limit raise can now promise 4 card support or Hxx or better with a singleton. The conventional forcing raises (Jacoby, Splinter) promise 4 cards support or better. Forcing hands with 3 card support go through 2/1 Game Force.

Responder's 2♠ Rebid after 1♥-1NT-2♣/♦

In a 1♥-1NT-2♣/♦ auction responder's 1NT bid denies 4 or more spades and limits responder's strength to less than an opening hand. Game is unlikely opposite many minimum opening hands. Since responder has denied as many as 4 spades, what would responder's 2♠ rebid mean? Some say it asks for a spade stopper on the way to 2NT. Some say this is a spade fragment looking for a better place to play (hoping partner has 4522?). There's a better way to use this otherwise empty bid.

When responder has a good minor suit fit for opener and a strong hand (9+ to 12- HCP) the right bid is 2♣ - a game invitational minor suit raise. With 5+ to 7-, responder passes opener's rebid in the minor. With 7+ to 9- HCP and great trumps responder raises the minor to the 3 level.

Notice that 2♠ differs from 2NT on this auction. 2NT does not promise length in opener's minor and does promise stoppers in the unbid suits. Hardy advocates 2♠ with any 9+-12- hand holding a good fit for opener's minor and *no spade stopper* though this is not always necessary. The idea is to invite opener to game in NT or the minor. The more distributional responder is, they will insist on the minor and not NT.

When Responder Has Passed

Many play 1NT non-forcing or semi-forcing by a passed hand because they have other ways to show 9+ to 11/12 HCP (e.g. natural non-forcing 2/1 bids, Drury, Drury Fit, Reverse Drury Fit) and/or because

opener might have less than sound opening values in 3rd and 4th seat. If you never open light in 3rd or 4th seat, then you can choose to play 1NT forcing in all seats.

Be sure you are clear what you bid with 10-11 HCP on hands that do not fit partner.

Be sure you are clear how to handle 10-12 HCP hands with 5 cards in the other major.

Opener's Rebids

Here is an outline of the common rebids by opener after responder's 1NT Forcing bid. There are also useful treatment variations outlined below. Be sure to see the section discussing problem hands. Note that you should adapt the meaning of the bids according to your 1NT opening style. Also note how your choice of range for your strong forcing opening impacts HCP's. We'll assume 21+ HCP for all strong forcing openings.

1♥_O-1NT_R (*Opener's rebids for 1♠_O-NT_R are analogous*)

Rebid	1NT Opening		Comments ← 5 Card Major Common?
	Yes	No	
2♣ _O	11-14	11-16	[1] Might be as short as 2 if opener has 4522 minimum otherwise at least 3 cards. Minimum hand 12-17 HCP. <i>Inform opponents.</i>
2♦ _O	11-14	11-16	At least 3 cards, minimum hand
2♥ _O		11-16	At least 6 cards, minimum hand 12-17 HCP. <i>4+ Cards after 1♠_O</i>
2♠ _O		11-17	Reverse forces 1 round. Minimum 5♠6♥ hands. Maximum 4♠5♥+ hands. <i>At least 6 cards, minimum hand 12-17 HCP after 1♠_O</i>
2NT _O	18-19 ⁻	15-17	Balanced invitational 5332. Strength as per NT opener [2]
3♣ _O		17-20	4 or more clubs, 5 or more hearts forcing one round.
3♦ _O		17-20	4 or more diamonds, 5 or more hearts forcing one round.
3♥ _O		17-20	6 or more hearts not forcing.
3♠ _O		17-20	Maximum 5♠6♥ hands (<i>with equal or longer ♠ opener opens 1♠</i>)
3NT _O	19-20	18-20	Balanced 5332. Rarely 5422 with chunky 3\2 card suits –or– <i>Solid 6+ Major Gambling 9 tricks (Meckstroth Adjunct required).</i>
4♣ _O		17-20	Undefined. Great playing strength/distribution. <i>Possible uses: natural 66 hand, self splinter for slam opposite the right King, Exclusion RKC In Hearts, other.</i>
4♦ _O			
4♥ _O		12+	To Play. Lots of Hearts. No fear of void in responder's hand. No 2 nd suit.
4♠ _O		17-20	Undefined. Great playing strength/distribution. <i>Possible use: self splinter for slam opposite the right King, RKC In Hearts, other.</i>

[1] You can use Flannery (45 hands, 11-15 HCP) to avoid the rebid problem on the 2 card club fragment after you open 1 heart with a 4522 pattern. Whether that's the best use of the 2♦ or 2♥ bid for a situation that occurs so infrequently is up to you.

Opener's rebids are largely natural. Notice that with 15-17 opener must rebid as if weaker, then take one move past responder's rebid. Since responder will correct to the major suit whenever holding 2 cards, there is low risk that opener will be stranded at the wrong level. Since responder can rebid a new suit below 2 of opener's major, opener will have a chance to say more. Since responder will pass very weak hands with a fit for opener's second suit this might be the best strain, if not the best level.

[2] Opener might find it prudent to rebid the major at the two level at their 3rd turn instead of bidding 2NT though this misleads on overall strength. This is best where missing stoppers in 2 suits, sensing that NT is not the right strain. Holding a 15-17 HCP 55-type hand rebidding the major at the 2 level is right. A delayed rebid of the 2nd suit then completes the picture, and at a lower level than the alternative.

Note, opener's 3 level rebid of his/her 2nd suit is natural and 12-14. A jump rebid of the major shows 15-17 and a 6-4 pattern. Opener's reverse into 2♠_O is either on a 56 hand or a strong 45 hand. Subsequent bidding defines shape and strength.

Opener will jump to 4 of the major with any hand that will play well opposite partner's 5 HCP. With a control rich 10-12, responder should consider a move toward slam. Suits past 4 of opener's major on this auction are cue bids.

Responder's Rebids and Continuations

Let's study 1♥_O. The principles apply directly to 1♠_O auctions with minor adjustments.

1♥ _O	HCP	Rebids and Comments
1 NT _R	5+ to 9-	No fit for partner's major. 0-2 cards (Some use this for weak fitting hands).
	9+-12-	No fit for partner's major. 0-2 cards
	9+-12-	3 Card Limit Raise (Poor raise, balanced no 0/1)
2♣ _O	12-17	2+ cards (4522 rebids 2♣ _O) fragment. Denies 6 spades unless top of range. NF
	5+-9-	2♦ _R Weak, at least 5+ Cards & 0-1 cards in opener's major. NF Discourages
	15-17	2♥ _O 5 cards NF. Might have 5♣. Opener jumps in the major with 6-4 hands.
	15-17	2♠ _O 3-4 cards, very strong hand. Forcing 1 round 4504/40 or 3514/41
	15-17	2NT _O Balanced hand typically 5332
	12-14	3♣ _O 55+ in 2 suits, 0-1 diamond
	15-17	3♦ _O Some 1543/34 or more shape. Forward going but not forcing.
	15-17	3♥ _O 5 Cards. Extra strength, might be balanced. NF
	5+-9-	2♥ _R Weak, at least 5+ Cards & 0-1 cards in opener's major. NF Discouraging
	9+-12-	2♠ _R Invitational Minor raise 5+ cards (or good 4), 0-1 cards in opener's major. Inference spades not stopped for NT.
	9+-12-	2NT _R Invitation to 3NT. Implies but not guarantees 2 cards in opener's major. Usually balanced but can be 3055 or 3154/45. Bid if 5♣ and 2♥.
	5+-9-	3♣ _R Weak support 5+ Cards. 0-1 in opener's major
	9+-12-	3♦ _R Invitational 6+ cards in suit, 0-1 in opener's major.
	9+-12-	3♥ _R 3 card limit raise, balanced hand. Invitational 6+ Card suit over 1♠ _O
	9+-12-	3♠ _R Splinter limit raise 3 trumps. 3 card limit raise, balanced hand over 1♠ _O
	9+-12-	3NT _R Gambling 3NT in other minor
	11-12	4♣ _R Splinter limit raise 3 trumps.
	11-12	4♦ _R Splinter limit raise 3 trumps.

Modern Treatment Menu

What follows are common treatments that add to or change the basic bidding approach for a variety of tactical advantages. We share these for your learning without preference.

1NT Semi Forcing

The 1NT Semi- Forcing response is as described above, except this bid is no longer strictly forcing on opener. Opener can pass the 1NT bid under this approach with:

- 1) any minimum hand with 5 trumps that would not accept a limit raise, and
- 2) all minimum 4♠5♥22 hands (eliminating the artificial 2♣ call on a 2 card suit).

In general, opener will always rebid the major with 6. This means that a new suit rebid by opener implies a sound opening (14-17 HCP) or equivalent compensating distribution. This is the current consensus Bridge World 2001 Poll approach.

Constructive Simple Raises

One approach to constructive bidding is to put all weak major raises on 3 card support (5+ to 7- HCP) through 1NT forcing too. This allows the partnership to use the simple major raise as a good raise (7+ to 9 HCP) with 3 trumps (*Bergen raises assumed; not using Bergen? then the support length is 3+*). This helps distinguish constructive hands and support length making opener's decisions simpler.

The downside for using 1NT instead of a simple raise on weak hands is that opponents can now enter the auction at 2♣ or above instead of 2NT and above. They have more room to communicate. The preemptive value of 1♠-2♠ is great and might not be compensated by the benefit from constructive simple raises (and the complement Bergen 4 card constructive raise). Note that the use of Precision or any forcing club system with limited opening 1 bids eliminates the need to distinguish between weak and constructive major raises.

Weak Preempt to Game

Some pairs want to differentiate between weak preemptive 4 level raises and constructive 4 level preempts. To do this, they choose all direct 1 Major - 4 Major bids to show 7-9 HCP and 5+ trumps with a 0/1 in the hand. Opener can continue with a cue bid or Ace Asking bid. *You can see it's possible to switch the meanings and put the constructive hands through 1NT.*

This leaves 4-6 HCP hands of same shape for 1NT followed by the jump to game. Again, this approach is not immediately preemptive and might allow opponents to communicate. Likewise this approach is not fully compatible with 1NT Semi Forcing where opener can pass 1NT.

Bart 2♦

Named after Leslie C. Bart (wrongly attributed to Bart Bramley by Marshall Miles) this convention applies only over 1♠_O-1NT_R-2♣_O. This treatment was originally created so responder could differentiate between 5 and 6+ card heart holdings opposite partner's 1♠_O.

A 2♦ rebid by responder is artificial and promises no more than 2 spades, and 5 hearts or one of several invitational hands. With 5 hearts and a weak hand, responder must tolerate a 2♣_O rebid. Opener treats the Bart 2♦ bid as showing 5 hearts and should raise ♥s with any hand holding 3 or more hearts. A jump to 3♥ is a game invitation and a raise to 4♥ is a distributional monster 15-17 HCP where opener couldn't jump shift. Opener can choose to support hearts with as few as 2 cards when appropriate (Hx or better).

Responder's ♥ rebid is now 6+ cards with 5-9 HCP, and a jump rebid in ♥ is 6+ cards and invitational strength 10-12 HCP. Additionally responder can bid all invitational suited hands through Bart 2♦ so that immediate jumps to 3 of a minor can be preemptive in nature, discouraging a spade contract.

The Bart 2♦ convention helps distinguish which major the partnership should choose, and facilitates more effective bidding with invitational hands. This approach surrenders the natural meaning of a 2♦ rebid by responder which is rarely a loss.

Over 2♦_R, opener must bid 2♥_O with a heart fit or 2♠_O with any 12-17 HCP hand and no heart fit. A new suit by opener at the 3 level implies a 5-5 hand.

For the auction 1♠-1NT-2♣-2♦ Opener rebids:

<u>Bid</u>	<u>HCP</u>	<u>♠s</u>	<u>♥s</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Comment</u>
2♥ _o	12-14	5	3+		3 or more hearts (might be only 2)
2♠ _o	12-17	5+	0-2		0-1 Hearts, sometimes 2 hearts
2NT _o	15-17	5	2		Likely 5233
3♣ _o	12-14	5+	0-2	5+♣	5-5 Minimum. No Heart Interest.
3♦ _o	12-14	5+	0-2	5+♦	5-5 minimum. No Heart Interest.
3♥ _o	15-17	5+	3+		Game Invitation
3♠ _o	15-17	6+	0-2		Game Invitation
3NT _o	15-17	7+	0-2		Rare/Gambling. Solid Spades
4♣ _o	15-17	5+	3+	5+♣	Splinter Void
4♦ _o	15-17	5+	3+	5+♦	Splinter Void
4♥ _o	15-17	5+	3+		Likely minor suit singleton 5431/13 or more distribution
4♠ _o	12-17	7+	0-2		Slam unlikely opposite 3 card limit raise. Distributional.

For the auction 1♠-1NT-2♣-2♦-2♥ Responder rebids:

<u>Bid</u>	<u>HCP</u>	<u>♠s</u>	<u>♥s</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Comment</u>
2♣ _R	9+/12-	2			Strong 2 card raise. Not 5 hearts
2NT _R	11-12	1-2			Invitational Hand.
3♣ _R	9+/12-	5+	0-2	5+♣	Invitational single suited hand (immediate jump to 3 preempts)
3♦ _R	9+/12-	5+	0-2	5+♦	Invitational single suited hand (immediate jump to 3 preempts)
3♥ _R	9+/12-	0-2	5+		Invitational in Hearts, not spades
3♠ _R	9+/12-	3	0-2		Game Invitation on 2 great Spades – do not use BART with 3 card limit raise. Raise immediately instead.
3NT _R	11/12	0-2	6		Solid 6+ card suit
4♣ _R	11/12	0-2	5+	5+♣	
4♦ _R	11/12	0-2	5+	5+♦	
4♥ _R	11/12	0-2	6+		Distributional values

Anti-Bart

Published by Josh Sher and Marc Umeno <http://homepage.mac.com/bridgeguys/pdf/AntiBart.pdf>

Anti-Bart extends the Bart bidding concepts to the 1♥_o-1NT_R-2♣_o auction. Anti-Bart allows us to distinguish between a good heart preference or a weak heart preference, and a 2NT bid with or without club support.

Over the 1♥_o-1NT_R-2♣_o auction opener bids as follows:

<u>Bid</u>	<u>HCP</u>	<u>♠s</u>	<u>♥s</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Comment</u>
2♥ _R	8-10		2		Good 2 card preference
2♠ _R	9+/10-			5♣	Good club raise
2NT _R	11-12			<4♣	Balanced invitation without club support
3♣ _R	5+-9-		0-2	5+♣	Weak courtesy raise
3♦ _R	5+-9-	5+	0-2	6+♦	Invitational single suited hand (immediate jump to 3 preempts)
3♥ _R	9+/12-		3		3 Card Limit Raise

Over 1♥_O-1NT_R-2♣_O-2♦_R - 2♥_O Opener is forced to bid 2♥_O (with one exception). The auction proceeds:

<u>Bid</u>	<u>HCP</u>	<u>♠s</u>	<u>♥s</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Comment</u>
PaSS _R	5-7+		5+		Weak hand hearts only
2♠ _R	11-12			5♣	Inv. club raise wants game if opener really has clubs
2NT _R	11-12			4♣	Balanced invitation (might have 3=2=3=5)
3♣ _R	9-10		0-2	6+♣	Unbalanced raise
3♦ _R	9+-12-	5+	0-2	6+♦	Invitational single suited hand (immediate jump to 3 preempts)
3♥ _R	9+/12-		3		3 Card Limit Raise with a Club Fit on the side

Opener bypasses the forced 2♥_O puppet holding with any hand that can make game opposite a good 7 to bad 8 HCP with responder.

<u>Bid</u>	<u>HCP</u>	<u>♠s</u>	<u>♥s</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Comment</u>
2♥ _O	12-17		2/3+		Normal minimums and sound hands
2♠ _O	16+	4+	5+		Normal Reverse
2NT _O	17-19		6		6322 with 6 weak hearts
3♣ _O	17-19		5+	3+♣	Fragment in unbalanced hand. Game Invite in hearts
3♦ _O	17-19		5+	3+♦	Fragment in unbalanced hand. Game Invite in hearts
3♥ _O	17-19		6		6322 with 6 strong hearts

Transfers over the 2NT Raise by Opener.

Opener's 2NT rebid is strong 18-19 HCP and virtually game forcing. Opener typically has a 5332 hand with 18-19 HCP. (With 20-21 HCP Opener would rebid 3NT. With 6+ cards in the major opener would jump rebid. With a side 4 card suit opener would jump shift into the 4 card side suit). Game should be possible with any good 6 HCP hand for responder. After opener's 2NT rebid the pair has not been able to investigate strain. With a very weak hand, responder might want to play in a long suit at the 3 level. With a constructive hand and no fit, responder wants to invite accordingly. With a big hand and a suit, responder wants to consider slam with the right fit and controls.

Transfers enable these distinctions. (What follows is not completely compatible with the Meckstroth Extension).

Responder's 3 level bids are transfers to the next highest suit. 3♠ can be used as a transfer to clubs, as Minor Suit Stayman, or as a transfer to 3NT and a prelude to a minor suit slam try.

Responder passes opener's rebid with a minimum and a long suit. Responder raises opener to invite game holding a minimum hand, 2 spades and a good 5+ card suit (the target of the transfer).

Meckstroth Adjunct

Bidding 2NT with a balanced 5332 18-19 HCP hand is an infrequent and potentially suboptimal use of this rebid. Bidding 3NT with 19 HCP is often right even with responder's worst minimums. Opener can bid 18 HCP balanced hands by bidding the minor fragment first and rebidding 2NT (15-17 HCP becomes 15-18 HCP).

Strong two suited hands are very difficult for opener to communicate precisely. 55 hands with 15-17 HCP, 54 hands with 18-21 HCP and 55 hands with 18-21 HCP are very offensively oriented. Slam depends on finding the right few cards.

Jeff Meckstroth proposed a very useful treatment to handle these distinctions. In his original treatment, the strong 18-21 5-5 hand was shown by opener's jump shift. This proposes an alternative treatment to include 15-17 HCP 55 hands.

A jump shift rebid by opener shows a 5-5 15-17 HCP hand. 2NT now shows 18-21 HCP and one of three shapes: 5-5, 5-4, or a very strong single suited hand.

Assume 1♠-1NT-2NT (Hearts by analogy). Responder bids as follows:

<u>Bid</u>	<u>HCP</u>	<u>Mini and Maxi Splinters</u>
3♣	5+/12-	Waiting. 0-2 cards for opener's major suit. Conventional. All other bids show shortness and fit.
3♦	5+/9-	0/1♦ Mini splinter. 2-3 Spades
3♥	5+/9-	0/1♥ Mini splinter. 2-3 Spades
3♠	9+/12-	Balanced 3 card limit raise
3NT	5+/9-	0/1♣ Mini splinter. 2-3 Spades
4♣	9+/12-	0/1♣ Splinter. 3 Spades
4♦	9+/12-	0/1♦ Splinter. 3 Spades
4♥	9+/12-	0/1♥ Splinter. 3 Spades
4♠	5+/9	2+ Spades weak hand in support

Responder can show valuable shortness and fit opposite partner's major. Partner's 18-21 HCP not only provide security, but fit and shortness can help the partnership reach makeable thin slams. With 5+/9- hands, 2 card support is sufficient. With 9+/12- hands, 3 card support is required. This means we should bid 3♣ with 9+/12- hands and 0-2 card support.

The Meckstroth Adjunct is not compatible with Transfer bids over opener's 2NT response. If you wish to include transfer responses, while enabling splinters, then use splinters at the 4 level, and have the 3 level transfers show either a desire to play in the target suit at the 3 level or a balanced maximum limit raise with length or strength in the target suit. Up to you!

13-15 HCP Balanced Hands

If you can remember back to Goren and early versions of Standard bidding, the jump to 2NT by responder after partner's 1NT opening was a balanced 13-15 HCP hand, tending to deny a fit for the major. Some like to include balanced hands not qualifying as a forcing Major Raise in the 1NT Forcing bid. This enables all 2/1 minor suit bids to guarantee a minimum of 5 cards in the suit. The 1st response of 3NT can take on other meanings (splinter, mini-splinter, 16+ Balanced, for example). Responder shows the 13-15 HCP balanced hand by rebidding 3NT at the 2nd turn. Opener can correct to 4 of the major with appropriate hand types.

Increasing the strength range to 5+ to 15 HCP eliminates any immediate competitive bidding inferences about partnership strength. The response strength range is too wide. 1NT as a negative misfit signal is no longer so pure. Partner could now have an opening hand.

If responder bids 3NT with 13-15 HCP and 3 trumps, there is a dilemma. Opener would want to play in 4 of the major when partner has 3 cards and 3 NT when partner has 2 cards. Does partner have 3 card support or not? There is no way to find out and keep 3NT as an option, perhaps bypassing the best spot. Pairs playing this approach typically pass 3NT when opener has a 5332 pattern. The idea/hope is that the NT game will score as well or better than the major when the suit is 5-3.

The better way is to adopt the immediate 3NT bid by responder as a balanced game force showing 3 card support. This helps the partnership avoid the ambiguity of a 3 card forcing raise when using the 5+ to 15 HCP range. Typically the hand shape will be 3343/34. However some pairs will bid many 4432 shapes with 3 trumps this way. This helps ensure a 5 card suit for the 2/1 bid.

Kaplan Exchange

The Kaplan exchange occurs only over opener's 1♥ bid, and is NOT used by a passed hand. This approach is currently a mid-chart ACBL convention meaning that it can be used only at National tournaments (Unrestricted events, extended team competition, Flight A Regionally rated events). This approach is consistent with Jeff Rubens's Useful Space Principle.

The meaning of the 1♠ and 1NT bids are switched over partner's 1♥ opening bid. 1♠ shows 4 or fewer spades and 5+ to 12- HCP and is forcing one round. 1NT shows 5+ Spades and 5+ to 12- HCP and is forcing one round. Some play 3- spades for 1♠ and 4+ Spades for 1NT).

Opener responds to either bid as a forcing 1NT with the following exceptions:

- Opener can rebid 1NT over 1♠ with the 4♣5♥ minimum hand confident that this is a good contract.
- Opener can raise to 2♣ directly with 3 or 4 card support. This is a minimum rebid (not a forcing reverse). Opener jumps with stronger hands (3♠ = 15-17 HCP; 4♠=18-21 HCP).

Note that opener declares either major suit contract when a fit is found.

1NT Game Forcing

This is a mid-chart ACBL convention and is a logical extension of the useful space principle well beyond common practice at all but National and world championship team competition. All game forcing hands begin with 1NT. That makes all 2/1 calls non-forcing. The emphasis is on having opener describe their hand shape and location of honor cards. This approach is usually found with relay type systems where controls and hand pattern are identified by game level. Using 1NT as a Game Force allows maximum space for strain and level exploration.

If the requirements for this bid include limit raise hands for opener's major, then this is a general chart convention. While included here for completeness, the impact on the rest of the constructive bidding agreements are substantial and beyond the scope of this article.

History

Back when Goren as standard (*ca.* 1936) Eastern Scientific developed the 5 card major approach. East coast players commonly used 5 card majors while Westerners were more likely to use 4 card majors.

The 1NT Forcing convention in response to an opening major suit one bid traces back to the 1950's. Alvin Roth and Tobias Stone published their Roth-Stone 5-card Major system with sound openings, sound 2/1 responses, and a Forcing 1NT response.

Opener could no longer pass 1NT by agreement. Why? All 10-12 HCP minimums were folded into the 1NT bid. The 1NT bid now covered a larger range (5-12 HCP). Since there is a tangible risk that opener would pass out 1NT with 12-13 HCP while responder held 12 HCP -- a NT or major suit game waiting to be bid -- 1NT was made a one round force.

Was this risky? Not really... a 7 card major suit fit would occur with reasonable frequency (5-2 or 6-1), or a 4-4 or playable 4-3 minor suit fit would play as well as 1NT and better in many cases. Only a few hands played better in 1NT, so the offsetting loss was judged small.

This helped pairs improve the contract strain when holding very weak highly distributional hands that played better in responder's suit than in notrump. 1NT Forcing helps pairs stop in responder's suit when responder holds a singleton or void in opener's major.

Kaplan Sheinwold (KS) system uses 1 NT forcing after a major suit opening bid. A 2/1 bid by responder led to game force only when a fit was found. Responder could cancel the game force signal by rebidding the 2/1 suit at the 3 level (6 card semi-solid suit or better). This is associated with "2/1 game force unless rebid" approach (See the ACBL convention card). The 2/1 bid retained the standard 10 HCP minimum, and a subsequent major raise (or new strain) by responder established a game force even at the 2 level. This provided a big improvement when responder held a fit for partner's major, but didn't help immediate competitive bidding communication.

Richard & Rhoda Walsh, Paul Soloway, and John Swanson and others merged the concepts of Roth Stone and KS into one refined bidding approach that spread quickly, known as Walsh or Western Scientific. In 1974 5 Card majors Western Style was authored by Max Hardy.

Max Hardy, Mike Lawrence, Matt & Pam Granovetter, Steve Robinson, Marshal Miles, Paul Thurston, Alan Sontag, Harold Feldheim, Dee Berry, Marty Bergen, Shirley Silverman and more have published extensively on 2/1 Forcing systems and the 1 NT Forcing convention. Please check out the many books and pamphlets available for more insight on this popular convention.