Forcing Bids - Forcing Partner to Bid

The most popular system at the club is Standard American. It has a bit of a flaw where you have sequences like 1H-2D and you are now "close to game" values between the partnership but not quite enough to force to game yet. It makes bidding awkward because it can be unclear if they are forcing. For example 1H-2D-2H should show a basic opening hand with (probably) a 6 card suit. Is it forcing though? What if I have 5 hearts and 4 clubs and a basic opening hand is 1H-2D-3C forcing? Maybe you think it is forcing but your partner does not 🙁

- Learn and play 2-over-1 game force, solves so many problem. It is not a massive change from standard but does require having a partner who also wants to learn this system. I am willing to help with the 2-over-1 basics in private for any pair who wants to learn it.
- I will recommend what is forcing vs non-forcing but you need to discuss with your partner and agree! The best way is with lots of examples. Then you will just need to use intuition.

Note there is a distinction between setting a **GAME FORCE** and a **ONE ROUND FORCE**.
GAME FORCE = Partnership cannot allow bidding to stop below game level (3NT+)
ONE ROUND FORCE = Partner is forced to bid for one round. Normal meaning of "forcing"
NON-FORCING = Partner can pass. Note that many non-forcing bids are still encouraging.

Note that when the partnership is in a GAME FORCE there is no need to jump to force anymore below game. Therefore jumping straight to a game when in a game force actually shows a weaker hand than not jumping. Usually warning partner off of bidding slam.

When you make a forcing bid it means you are guaranteed to get another bid. So if the opposition makes an interfering bid, partner is no longer "forced" to bid. For example 1H-2C is a forcing sequence but the opponents interfere with 2S. Opener is allowed to pass in this forcing sequence because their partner will still have a bid. e.g. 1H-2C-(2S)-P-?

Examples (no competition bidding - standard american)
1H = Non-Forcing. Partner should pass with less than 6 HCP. If you need are strong enough to force partner to bid start with a strong artificial 2C opener.
2NT = Non-Forcing. From previous lesson this is a limit bid. Limit bids are usually non-forcing if they are natural.
1H-1S = One Round Forcing. 6+ points, unlimited so partner must keep bidding.
1H-2D = One Round Forcing. 10+ points, unlimited so partner must keep bidding.
P-1H-2D = Non-Forcing. A passed hand is limited so new suit is no longer forcing.
1H-2D-2H = Non-Forcing. If you need to force (to game) you will need to bid 3H instead.
1H-2D-3H = Game Forcing. Jump to show extra values. Opposite 10+ points from the responder this is game forcing.
1H-2D-3C = Game Forcing. "Breaking the barrier" (going past 2 of your opening suit) after partner shows 10+ shows better than minimum hand so enough to force to game. The partnership cannot stop below 3NT now. If you have hearts and clubs but a minimum hand you will need to pick between 2H or 2NT as your non-forcing bids.
1H-2D-2S = Game Forcing. As above.

1H-2D-2NT = Non-Forcing. Minimum balanced hand. Rebid NT is not “breaking the barrier”.
1H-2C-2D = Non-Forcing. Opener did not “break the barrier” so this is not forcing.
1H-2C-3D = Game Forcing. Jump to show extra values. Opposite 10+ points from the responder this is game forcing.
1C-1H-1S = One Round Forcing. You can agree on this being non-forcing if you want (and use 2S to force) but I prefer new suits at the 1-level to be forcing to conserve bidding room.
1C-1H-3C = Non-Forcing. A jump in the original suit after partner makes a 6+ point response is highly invitational but not forcing.
1C-1H-3C-3H = Game Forcing. Any bid other than pass after a highly invitational bid should now be considered accepting the invite and game forcing.
1C-1H-2D = One Round Forcing. “Breaking the barrier” with a new suit shows extra points. Opposite a 6+ point response this is called a reverse and is one round forcing. Look into a convention called “blackout” to help with follow-up forcing bids.
1H-1S-3C = Game Forcing. A jump shift (jump in a new suit) after partner makes a 6+ point response is game forcing. The partnership cannot stop below 3NT.
2H-2S = One Round Forcing. Bidding a new suit over a preempt should be forcing for one round. The preempter is expected to bid again no matter how bad they think their hand is. Rebidding their preempt suit if they cannot raise partners suit or suggest NT.
1NT-2D!-2H-3C = Game Forcing. When mentioning two suits separately after a 1NT opening it is game forcing unless agreed otherwise.
1NT-2C!-2H-3C = Game Forcing. Same as above applies after stayman.

Fourth Suit (Game) Forcing
A highly recommended convention. 1D-1S-2C-2H! Opener has shown diamonds and clubs. You could use 2H here as natural but there is not much point recommending the fourth suit as a spot to play. If you have hearts stopped you can bid 2NT or 3NT instead. However you will have a lot of hands where you are responder with 13+ points but unsure what the correct suit to play is. Use the fourth suit as an artificial game force. Now you can keep bidding naturally knowing the partnership is forced to game. It is especially handy for finding out if partner has 3 card support for your major. It also frees up other bids to be non-forcing.

1H-1S-2C-2D! = Game Forcing. Artificial game force, bid naturally no need to jump around after setting a game force.
1H-1S-2C-2S = Non-Forcing. Now we can just show we prefer spades.
1H-1S-2C-3S = Non-Forcing. Very highly encouraging with 6 spades. If you want a forcing bid start with fourth suit forcing then bid spades.

New Minor Forcing
This is a highly recommended convention. Comes up after responder bids a major and opener rebids 1NT (or 2NT). Bidding an unbid minor is now an artificial forcing bid. This is very helpful when responder has 5 card major and wants to check if opener has 3 card support. There are other similar conventions (e.g. checkback, 2 way new minor forcing) that you can investigate for yourself. Opener is the expected to show in order of preference:
1) 4 cards in the other major
2) 3 cards in responders major
3) NT with balanced hand and controls in the unbid suits
4) rebid one of their suits to best describe their shape

If the bid was one round forcing opener can jump to show a maximum.
1C-1H-1NT-2D! = One Round Forcing. At least invitational hand almost always with 5 hearts.
1C-1H-1NT-3H = Non-Forcing. This is encouraging but not forcing with 6 card suit. With game values and 6 hearts jump to 4H. With game values and 5 hearts use new minor forcing then choose game.
1C-1H-2NT-3D! = Game Forcing. After 2NT rebid this is now game forcing but otherwise much the same as after the 1NT rebid.
1C-1H-2NT-3H = Non-Forcing. Just showing 6 hearts and minimum.
New minor forcing can also be used after opener repeats a minor at the 2-level..
1C-1H-2C-2D! = One Round Forcing. At least invitational hand almost always with 5 hearts.
1D-1H-2D-3C! = One Round Forcing. At least invitational hand almost always with 5 hearts.

Cue Raise
When the opponents bid a suit, there is no reason to be bidding their suit naturally as you should be trying to make a penalty double if you hold their suit and values. When you bid the oppositions suit it is called a cue bid. After partner has opened or overcalled a suit, making a cue bid is a good raise (invitational or better) of partners suit. It is one round forcing, and frees up natural raises to be competitive or preemptive. Cue bids are self alerting and do not need to be alerted at the table.

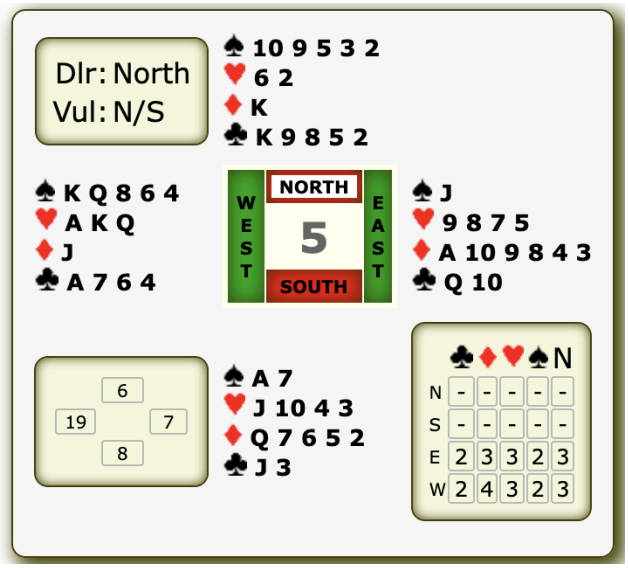
1S-(2C)-3C! = One Round Forcing. Good 3+ card spade raise.
1S-(2C)-3C!-3S = Non-Forcing. Repeat the suit at lowest level to not accept the invite. All other bids accept the invite and create a Game Force after a cue raise of a major.
1C-(1S)-2S!-2NT = Non-Forcing. NT bids after cue raise of a minor are not forcing. But they must have a good stopper in opponents suit. Repeating the minor is non-forcing and all other bids are Game Force.
1S-(2C)-3S = Non-Forcing. Preemptive rather than invitational. 4+ card support with weak hand and some distribution.

Cue Bids, Doubles, Redoubles, Competitive Bidding
Some other examples in competitive auctions.

1S-(X)-XX = Non-Forcing. Redouble here shows 10+ points and is unlimited. But the pressure is on the opponents now you should be able to make 1SXX so it is not forcing.
1S-(X)-2C = Non-Forcing. With a game forcing hand you can start with redouble.
(1S)-X = One Round Forcing. Technically a takeout double is not forcing, but only if you want to convert it to a penalty double.
(1C)-2C = One Round Forcing. Cue bidding their suit when partner has not bid a suit should be a 2-suited hand. Research “Michaels Cue Bid” or similar conventions.
(1S)-2NT = One Round Forcing. You should be using 2NT as an artificial overcall as you could double with a big hand. It should be 2 suited in the minors. Research “Unusual 2NT”.
1S-(2D)-2H = One Round Forcing. New suit at the 2 level is still (9)10+ points similar to without the interference.
1S-(2H)-3C = One Round Forcing. New suit at the 3 level after interference is 10+ points not quite game forcing.
1S-(2H)-3C-3H! = One Round Forcing. Any time you make a cue bid deeper in the auction it is forcing for one round and generally asks partner to describe their hand, often giving preference to bidding NT with a stopper in opponents suit.

1S-(2C)-2S-(3C)-3S = Non-forcing. When you have already agreed a suit then repeating the suit in a competitive auction is non-forcing and not even invitational.
1S-(2C)-2S-(3C)-3H = One Round Forcing. The spade suit has already been set. This semi-natural bid with invitational plus hand. Partner will bid 3S to decline the invitation.
1S-(2H)-2S-(3H)-X = One Round Forcing. Advanced level bid. The double would normally be optional for penalties. Here it is the only bid we have to make an invitation as 3S would be competitive only.

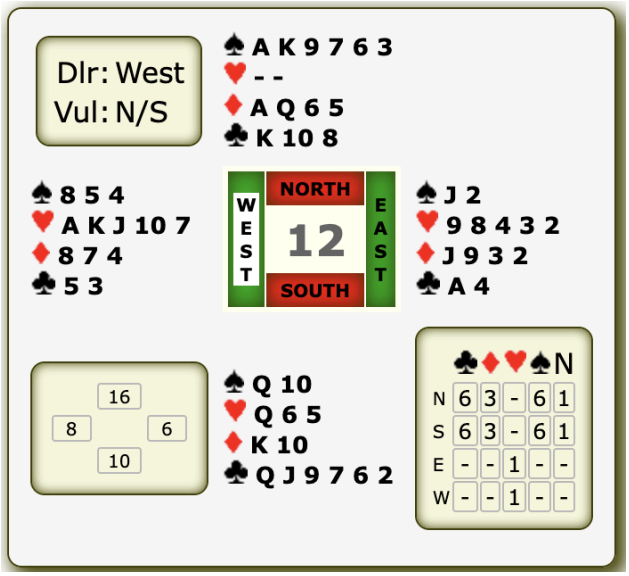
Examples



1S-1NT-3C-3D-3NT

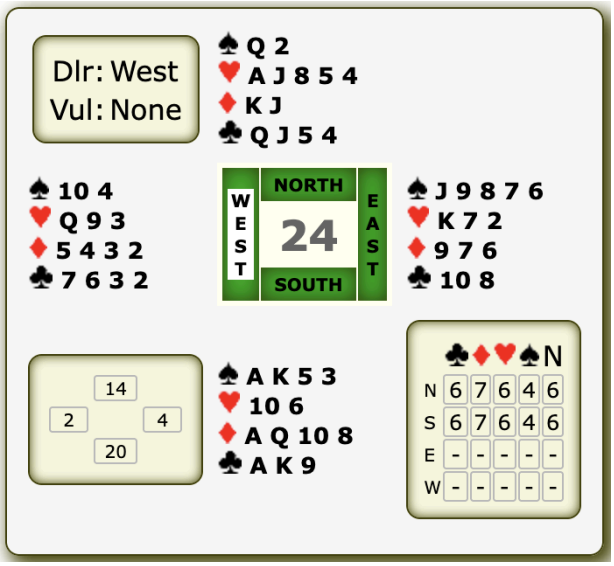
East does not have enough points to bid a suit at the 2 level but has 6HCP so must bid 1NT. When opener makes a jump-shift to 3C it is a GAME FORCING BID.

East has a minimum hand but must keep bidding. With heart and diamonds stoppers they would bid 3NT but here they best describe their hand with 3D.



1S-2C-3S-4S

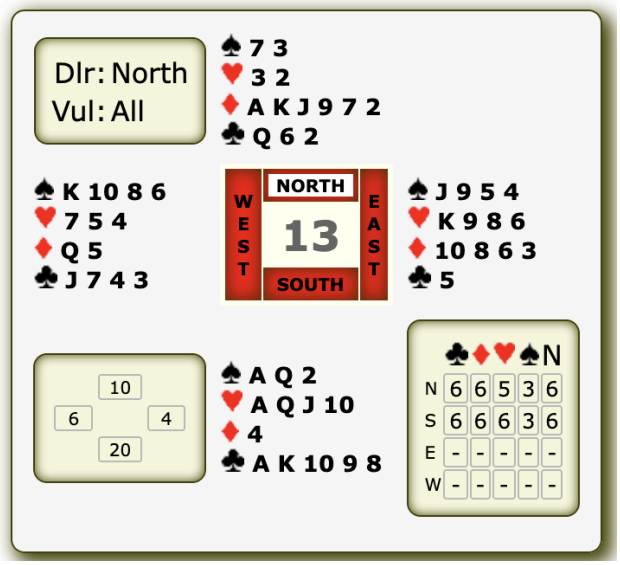
North bids 3S which is a GAME FORCING BID with six spades since they have jumped opposite a 10+ response. South Cannot pass 3S and with nothing extra to say agrees spades at game level.



1H-1S-2C-2D!-2NT-6NT

South has 20HCP and partner has opened so should immediately be thinking slam. Lets make sure partner does not pass!

1S is forcing ONE ROUND.
2D is fourth suit GAME FORCE.
Partner shows stopper in the 4th suit and denies having 3 spades, so we pick final contract 6NT. Note South could have bid 3D over 2NT (not that it is a good bid) in the full knowledge that the partnership is forced to game and partner will not pass that bid.

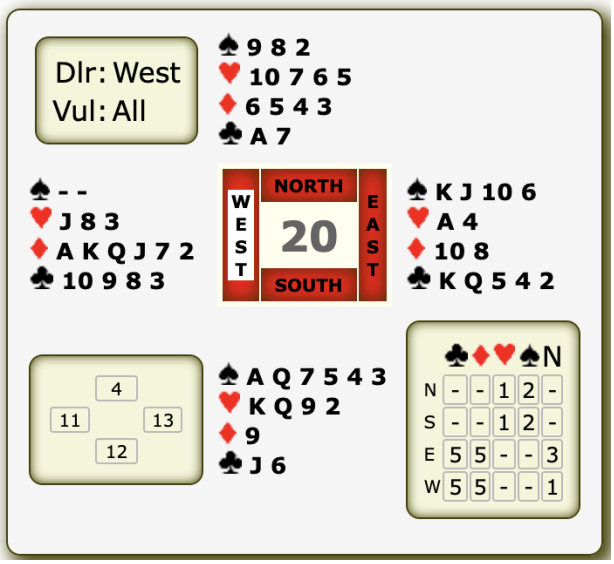


1C-1D-1H-3D-6NT
Alternatively 1C-1D-2H-3D-4NT-6NT

South opens 1C with unbalanced hand. After partner responds it is important to make sure the partnership does not stop below game.

1H should be one round forcing. If you prefer you could also bid 2H which should be jump shift and game forcing.

3D is invitational (because they did not use fourth suit forcing). South has an amazing hand with good controls and bids 6NT.



1D-1S-2D-3C!-3D-3H!-4C-5C
West opens 1D with their solid 6 card suit. East now wants to make sure the partnership keeps bidding to game.

1S = One Round Forcing
2D = Non Forcing
3C = New Minor Forcing (one round)
3D = Non Forcing
3H = Game Forcing. There is no reason to try and play in 3H. It is just a game forcing bid, probably not comfortable with bidding NT. 4C natural unbalanced and east plays in 5C.