

SUIT BIDDING

PART TWO

New Minor Forcing

If opener bids one of a minor suit, responder bids 1 of a major suit and opener rebids 1 no trump, responder has several possible rebids:

With a minimum (6-9 points) responder may pass as opener has fewer than 15 points and there is not enough for game.

With an invitational hand or better, responder can bid the other minor suit. This is an artificial bid asking opener to bid the other major with 4 cards, support your major with 3 cards. rebid 2 no trump with neither, or rebid his suit with 5 or more cards in the suit.

NOTE: When responder uses new minor forcing, opener should bid his four card major if he has one before bidding responder's suit with 3 card support. Then if responder bids 2 no trump, denying 4 card support for opener's second suit, opener may bid 3 of responder's 5 card suit.

NOTE: When responder uses new minor forcing, he usually has 5 of his first bid suit and is asking opener for 4 cards in the other major or 3-card support for his first bid major.

This is how responder can show a hand with 5-4 or 4-5 in the majors and an invitational hand or better, asking opener for 4 cards in responder's second major or 3 card support for responder's 5-card major.

NOTE: With 4-4 in the majors, responder will simply bid his majors up the line.

NOTE: New minor forcing is forcing for one round, not game forcing.

Fourth Suit Forcing

Unlike new minor forcing, which is forcing for only one round and usually follows a 1 no trump rebid by opener, fourth suit forcing is forcing to game. The beauty of fourth suit forcing is that it establishes a game forcing auction at a low level. The 4SF bid is always made by responder as his way of telling partner that the bidding may not stop short of game. Examples of 4SF:

1 diamond	pass	1 spade	pass
2 clubs	pass	2 hearts	

Responder's 2 heart bid is artificial, may or may not show hearts, must be alerted as 4SF to game. It asks opener to bid 3 hearts with 4 cards or 2 spades with 3 card

support (responder will know opener does not have 4 spades since he did not raise 1 spade to 2 spades) or 2 no trump with neither 4 hearts nor 3 spades or rebid a six card suit.

NOTE: Following 1 club 1 diamond 1 heart, 1 spade should be played as natural, not game forcing. It is not alterable and may be passed. In that auction, responder should bid 2 spades to show a game force (artificial, may or may not have a spade suit).

NOTE: Since we are using 4SF, responder's 3 level bid at his second turn should be invitational, since he could have bid 4th suit forcing at a lower level.

NOTE: 4SF is not used after a 2/1 response, since you are already in a game forcing auction.

NOTE: 4SF is only bid by responder.

NOTE: 4SF should not be used by a passed hand.

We have discussed bidding minor suits at the one level and responses by partner. Now we will discuss bidding major suits at the 1 level and responses:

Opening in a major suit

Except for opening bids of 1 no trump, which may include a 5-card suit, with 5 or more cards in a major suit and 12-14 points or 18-21 points, opening bidder must bid 1 of that major suits, promising an opening bid with 5 or more cards in that suit.

NOTE: Of course, with a balanced hand or 15-17 or 20-21 points and a five card major and no other 4-card suit, opening bidder may bid 1 or 2 no trump respectively as we have puppet Stayman or Smolen available to determine whether opener bid no trump with 5-card major suit.

What also comes into play are the inferences to be taken from what is not bid. For example, opening one spade denies a hand suitable for 1 no trump, where you can have 15-17 points but if you do, you can't have a 5-card major and another 4-card suit.

There are two exceptions to the requirement of opening a 5-card major at the one level:

1. If opener has a longer minor and a hand strong enough to show both suits, opener should bid the minor suit first followed by the major suit twice. This describes a hand with 6 or more cards of the minor and 5 or more cards of the major. For example:

S. 9
H. K Q J 6 4
D. 6
C. A Q 10 5 4 3

With this hand, bid clubs first then hearts twice. High card point total is only 12, but the all of the strength is concentrated in your two long suits which have great playing strength, sequences and tenaces (texture) Counting distribution points, one for the 5th spade and two for the 5th and 6th clubs, you have 15 playing points- enough to bid both suits.

The problem here, is that after you open one club, if partner responds one spade or one no trump, you have to bid 2 hearts to show your 5-card suit. Bidding in this fashion is called a reverse and typically shows a 2-suited hand with 18-21 points, which is likely to mislead your partner as to your point total. For that reason, I would consider opening 1 heart followed by clubs twice which describes a hand with 5-hearts and 5 clubs. You are lying about your distribution but more accurately describing your strength, while at the same time describing a hand with 5-5 instead of 6 five.

Change your clubs to A K J 5 4 3. Now you have 14 high card points plus 3 for added distribution points and you have enough to reverse because you have a 3-loser hand instead of a 4-5 loser hand.

Now change your hand to:

S. K Q J 6 4
H. 9
D. 6
C. A Q 10 5 4 3

Now you have a slightly different situation. If you open one club and partner responds 1 heart, you can now show your spade suit at the one level. This only promises 4 spades, but now if partner bids 1 no trump, you can rebid your spades at the 2 level to show your pattern. Partner will know that you have 5-6 distribution, but not enough points for a reverse.

The lesson here is to be careful to describe your hand both in terms of distribution and playing strength and consider the message sent with each sequence of bidding.

2. The other exception is where you have two 5-card majors and an opening hand, in which case, you bypass the hearts and bid 1 spade, planning to bid 2 hearts at your next turn. If you have 5-6 in the majors, it is best to open your 6 card major planning to bid your 5-card major twice.

NOTE: If you have 5 or 6 spades and four of another suit, it is usually right to bid your 4-card suit at your next turn, unless your first suit is very strong and your second suit is very weak.

Responses to 1 of a major suit

The following discussion assumes you are playing the 2/1 system, where your one level response is forcing for one round and your 2 level bids in a new suit are forcing to game. Here are the possible responses to 1 heart:

1 spade Promises 4 or more spades, at least 6 points, forcing for one round subject to further clarification.

If opener rebids 1 no trump, he is limiting his hand to 12-14 points and denying 6 hearts.

If opener rebids a new suit at the 2-level, he is usually showing 4 or more cards in that suit and 15 or more points. It is not forcing. You should bid again only if you have more than a minimum, 5 or more cards in your suit, support for hearts or support for your second suit.

1 no trump promises 6-10 points, denies 4 hearts in which case he would raise to 2 hearts, denies 4 spades in which case he would bid 1 spade. In the 2/1 system, responder's 1 no trump bid could have more than 10 points, but he is precluded from bidding a new suit at the 2 level unless he has 5 cards in that suit. An exception would be if responder has 12 or more points and should make a game forcing bid. Since one no trump is only forcing for one round, it is not game forcing. In such case, responder can invent an artificial bid, usually 2 clubs to announce to opener they are in a game forcing auction and cannot stop short of 3 no trump.

Responder can also have an invitational hand (10-11) with 3 card support for opener's suit. There is no direct bid to show

this hand, so in the 2/1 system, responder bid 1 no trump, forcing for one round planning to jump to 3 of opener's suit at his next turn. This sequence specifically shows an invitational hand with 3 card support for opener's suit.

There are other bids we use to describe responder's hand with 4 card support for partner's suit whether minimum, invitational or game forcing.

Opener's replies to responder

If responder makes a one level response to opener's suit bid (e.g. 1 heart, 1 spade), opener must bid again since responder's bid is unlimited. What he bids depends on what he has. With 4-card support for responder's suit and a minimum hand, he should raise responder's suit to the 2-level. With 6 cards in his own suit, he can rebid his suit to show 6. With a second suit of 4 cards or more, he can bid his second suit. With a minimum hand lacking 6 cards in his suit, a second suit with 4 or more cards or 4 card support for responder's suit, opener should reply 1 no trump. With 18-19 points, opener should reply 2 no trump.

Conventional responses to opening bid of 1 of a major

Bergen Raises

Bergen raises following partner's opening bid of 1 of a major are designed to show 4 or 5 card support for opener's suit with less than game forcing values:

3 clubs shows a hand with 4 card support and 6-10 points

3 diamonds shows a hand with 4 card support and 11-12 points (invitational)

3 of opener's major suit shows a hand with 4 card support for opener's major and less than 6 points.

With these bids in mind, consider the Law of Total Tricks which holds that all other things being equal, a combined 9 cards in a suit should yield 9 tricks, while a hand with a combined 10 cards in a suit should yield 10 tricks, regardless of combined point count.

Where this comes in really handy is where both pairs are competing, a pair should compete to the three or four level even without the requisite number of points, especially when not vulnerable against vulnerable opponents.

Jacoby 2 no trump

Jacoby 2 no trump is used when partner of the opening bidder has enough points to bid game and at least 4-card support for opener's major suit. It enables greater communication, especially with regard to exploring for slam. Following are the responses to Jacoby 2 no trump.

3 clubs	singleton or void in clubs
3 diamonds	singleton or void in diamonds
3 in other major	singleton or void in that suit
3 of opener's major	no shortness, extra values
3 no trump bid	either a balanced maximum or 6 th card in suit
4 clubs	good 5 card suit
4 diamonds	good 5 card suit
4 of bid major	minimum hand 12-14 points, to play

NOTE: When you have a second suit with 5 or more cards, you necessarily have shortness in another suit. Whether you bid your short suit or a second 5 card suit depends on your strength in the second suit. With a strong second suit (which has trick taking value) bid the second suit at the four level. With a weak 5 card second suit, bid your shortness, which is more valuable from a trick taking standpoint.

For example, if you open 1 spade and partner bids 2 no trump, with

S. K J 6 4 3 H. 2 D. Q 6 C. A K 9 4 2

Bid 4 clubs to show good second suit.

However, with

S. K Q J 6 4 H. 2 D. A 6 C. K 8 5 4 2

Bid 3 hearts to show shortness as club suit is not good.

Bidding by Passed Hand When partner Opens 1 of a Major

With less than a limit raise, you may bid 1 no trump or 2 of partner's major suit with 3 or 4 card support. Partner will know that you have less than a limit raise in his suit since you didn't use Drury.

2-way Reverse Drury

Drury is a bid used by a passed hand to show a limit raise (10-11 points) in partner's suit after partner has opened one of a major suit and asks whether opener has a full opening bid. There are several ways to bid Drury. I prefer to use 2-way Reverse Drury. Here's how it works:

After pass 1 heart or 1 spade (by partner) pass, you bid 2 clubs to show a 3-card limit raise in partner's suit or 2 diamonds to show a 4-card limit raise in partner's suit. Both bids are artificial, say nothing about clubs or diamonds and alterable.

If opener is interested in game in light of partner's limit raise, he may bid a new suit, raise to game in his suit or bid a new suit.

NOTE: Do not use Drury over interference – bid naturally.

NOTE: When using 2-way reverse Drury, you give up the ability to bid natural 2 clubs or 2 diamonds.

NOTE: Bidding 2 clubs or 2 diamonds Drury is not a 2/1 game forcing bid, since you are a passed hand. Game will only be bid if opener bids it in consideration of your Drury bid.

Splinter Bids

When partner opens 1 of a major and you have a limit raise with 4 card support and a singleton or void in a side suit, bid 4 of your short suit which perfectly describes your hand. Your short suit promises extra tricks by using your trumps to ruff losers in opener's hand.

Occasionally, you can make a splinter bid with 8 or 9 points if your hand evaluates to a limit raise with a concentration of values in the right places. This requires judgment. Like pornography, you know what it is when you see it.

NOTE: Do not use a splinter bid when you have opening values (12+ points). Instead, use Jacoby 2 no trump to find out whether partner has shortness of his own, a minimum or a maximum or a flat hand.

NOTE: Remember, shape trumps points. Use it to your advantage.