

Woodbury Bridge Club (WBC), Education

A course on the “2 over 1 Game Force” bidding system

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Introduction

In the Standard American bidding system, forcing bids are used to keep the bidding open, hopefully to find game but also to know where to stop in a part score. New suits by an unpassed responder are generally forcing, as are jump shifts (18-21 hcp) by opener. The partnership feels its way and if no suit fit is found, the bidding may lead to a NT contract, either 2NT or 3NT, or a reasonable suit part score.

In the “2 over 1 Game Force” bidding system, if the bidding goes 1 major - 2 minor or 1S-2H (showing 5 hearts), the partnership is going to game. Many bridge clubs now teach “2 over 1” rather than Standard American for their beginner classes.

The “Forcing No Trump”

The “2 over 1” system includes the “Forcing No Trump.” In Standard American bidding, if the bidding goes 1S-1NT opener can pass, but in the “2 over 1” system, if opener bids 1 of a major, they must bid over responder’s 1NT, since 1NT is *forcing 1 round*. Since 1S-1NT-2S promises six spades, and 1S-1NT-2H shows at least 4 hearts, opener sometimes must bid a 3-card minor at the 2 level since they are forced to bid again.

Holding AQxxx xx AKx Jxx you open 1S and partner responds 1NT forcing, and you must now bid one of your 3-card minors at the 2 level. Do you bid 2C or 2D? Bid 2C even though your diamonds are so much better. The reason is, your partner may have a long minor (6 or more) and no interest in game. Bidding 2C partner can pass with long clubs, but has room to bid 2D which is *not forcing* and is where responder wants to play the hand. If you bid 2D partner is forced to 3C if they have a long club suit. You are now higher than you need to be.

Another sequence. Holding AQxxx KQJx xx Qx you open 1S and partner bids 1NT forcing. A rebid by you of 2H shows 4 or more hearts. If partner returns to 2S, pass. If partner bids 3 of a minor, pass. Now what if opener holds 1 different card, a 5th heart: AQxxx KQJxx x Qx. One more heart makes this a much better hand. The bidding goes 1S-1NT-2H-2NT responder showing a good 11 or 12 hcp. Opener now bids 3H to complete the pattern of the hand. Responder will bid 4H holding 3 hearts, or bid 3NT.

When can I bid “2 over 1?” Over partner’s 1 of a major opening bid, bid “2 over 1” if you would have opened the hand yourself in 1st or 2nd chair without using the “Rule of 20”. That is, in order to bid “2 over 1” you need a minimum of 12 hcp.

Here is a “Rule of 20” hand that can open in 1st chair or 2nd chair but which should not make a 2 over 1 response over partner’s 1S opening: x AQxxx AJxx Txx Over partner’s 1S bid 1NT.

This means that the range for a 1NT response over partner’s 1 of a major opening is 6 to 11 hcp.

How does a “2 over 1” auction go?

Partner opens 1S and you hold: Qxx x AKxxx AJxx Bid 2D, game force. If partner bids 2H, bid 2S. NOTE: After you make a 2 level (“2 over 1”) bid over partner’s 1 of a major opening, if the next bid by you is a raise in opener’s opening suit, it is a 3 card raise. That sets the trump suit. (If you have a 12+ hcp hand and 4 of partner’s major opening, there is a bidding convention for this: The *Jacoby 2NT Game Forcing Raise*. We won’t be covering *Jacoby 2NT* here.)

Continuing, partner opens 1S and you hold: Qx x AKxxx AJxxx Bid 2D. If partner rebids 2S showing 6 spades, raise to 3S promising only 2 spades. You have at least a 6-2 fit. If over your 2D opener bids 2H, bid 3C. If opener is 5-4 in the majors, they will bid 3NT. If opener rebids 3H showing 5-5 or 6-5, bid 3NT. If opener then bids 4H, showing 6-5 or 6-6, return to 4S.

Another example. Partner opens 1S holding: AKxxx KJx Qx Jxx You hold: Qx Tx AKxxx ATxx and you respond 2D. Opener now properly bids 2NT. Carry on to 3NT. You may worry about hearts knowing opener does not hold 4, but opener is very likely to have hearts stopped given your minor suit strength. You also realize opener’s heart holding is not under direct assault because they are the declarer. This is ... “*right-siding*” the hand.

Another: AKxxx Qxx Qx Kxx opposite Qx Jx AKxxx ATxx **Left for class discussion!**

Does “2 over 1” work with a 1 of a minor opening?

Yes, but it’s not strictly forcing to game, for 2 reasons. First, a game in a minor suit takes 29 HCP. Second, you may not have all the suits stopped for an attempt at 3NT.

Usual bidding finds responder bidding 1 of a major over opener’s 1 of a minor opening. But what if partner opens 1D and you hold: KQx Jx Qxx AJxxx. Bid 2C and see what opener does. In these auctions, and in 1 minor-2 minor raise auctions, the goal is not to get to 5 of a minor because of the high card points needed. The goal is to get to 3NT or stop in a minor part score.

If opener rebids 2H, jump to 3NT. NOTE: 2H is not a reverse, it is merely showing a suit with stoppers. *In this type of sequence, we are showing stopped suits up the line.*

What if opener bids 2S? Bid 3D denying having hearts stopped. Opener would have bid hearts first if they had hearts stopped, so they may pass your 3D holding 5, ending the auction. Or they may hold 4-1-4-4 and raise to 4C. This is not forcing and will extricate the hand from a possible 4-3 diamond fit*. *We are not going to 5 of a minor on any of these auctions.*

NOTE: In these minor-suited auctions, when you are showing major suits you have stopped, you don't need 4 card major suits. Three is sufficient, or even two cards with AK.

(*I'm a proponent of a 1D opening shows 4 diamonds, thus 1C "Could be as short as 2." If you play 1D shows only 3, then 4C gets you out of a possible 3-3 diamond fit. Whew!)

The "asking" bid

Leaving "2 over 1" for a moment, playing "inverted minors," a single raise of a minor is a "limit raise" up to an opening hand. Use 2NT by opener to show both majors stopped.

Opener: KJx AJT KQxx xxx

Responder: Qxx Kxx AJxxx Jx

Opener starts 1D and responder goes 2D, forcing to at least to 2NT. Opener in fact bids 2NT which you play *conventionally* as showing both majors stopped. Responder is also worried about clubs, so they bid 3C "asking" - partner do you also have clubs stopped? In this case with no club stopper, opener bids 3D, *not forcing* which responder passes quick as a bunny!

Now change responder's hand to this: Qx Qxx AJxxx KQT.

The auction now goes: 1D-2D-2NT-3NT.

All suits are stopped and you are favored to make 3NT. The hand is not *right-sided* so responder's clubs are under stack, but the T makes dummy's clubs much stronger than KQx.

When is a new suit by an unpassed responder not forcing?

Is there such an auction? Yes, it's this and it applies to any bidding system.

1D-1S-1NT-2H This shows a 5-4 or 5-5 major hand by responder, is weak and non-forcing.

Final note: I play "1 minor – 2 minor raise" as Game Forcing with many of my partners as well as "2 over 1" with all partners. So, lots of game forcing bidding situations. But we have this agreement that *4 of a minor can be passed*. It's the safety net if there is no 8-card major fit, and 3NT is not in the cards.

In closing

Although I am a "2 over 1" advocate, try it only when you and partner are ready. It's not for everyone and it might not be right for you.