

FORCING BIDS IN BRIDGE

Session 2

By Baloney Bill, June 2025

You have likely examined your convention cards, looking carefully for forcing bids that I failed to mention last week, and found at least a couple, correct? Yes ___ No, I never even think about bridge after one of your lessons _____. Please answer honestly. Let's talk about another forcing bid, called **4th suit forcing**.

This bid relates to *responder's second bid*, which is a *key bid in describing responder's hand*. For example, you open one diamond, and partner responds 1H. That provides a wealth of information, correct? What do you now know about partner's hand? _____ OK, so not a wealth of information.

But, if for example, you now bid 1S, partner can describe her hand in more detail:

- Partner can bid 2H, but only if she has 5+ hearts. Why? Because she knows you have fewer than four hearts in your hand. How does she know this? Because she would have bid 2H after your 1H bid, showing, most likely, exactly four hearts. Why not 5+ hearts? _____
- Partner can bid one NT, showing a relatively balanced hand with fewer than four diamonds, fewer than 5 hearts, fewer than 4 spades, and less than invitational values (11 pts or a strong 10):
- Partner can bid 2 clubs with invitational values. *That's the fourth suit mentioned in this auction, and this fourth suit bid is FORCING. (4TH suit forcing).*
 - Some partnerships play this as forcing to game.
 - Others (like me) play it as a one-round force, showing invitational values, not game force values. I encourage newer players to play it as invitational, because you will get to employ it more often with a wider point spread possible for its implementation.

An example auction (your partner first, followed by your RHO, then you, then your LHO, then partner, etc.):

1D – P – 1H – P – 1S – P – ??

Your hand: K 9 2 A Q 8 3 2 A 7 3 9 6 Your bid? _____ Even with those lousy clubs? _____

Your bid can either end the auction or force it to continue. Do you want to end the auction with your hand? No _____

If you bid hearts again, would a 2H bid force partner to bid again? No _____ Would a 3H bid be forcing? No _____

How about 3 diamond? Forcing and descriptive? No _____ These are easy questions --- just wait until next week's quiz!

If partner now bids 3 clubs, is she interested in a 5C contract? _____ Is she forcing you to bid again?

Yes _____ How do you know? _____ Might she be suggesting a 3NT

contract? _____ A 6NT contract? Maybe _____

If she bids 3 diamonds instead, is she interested in a 5D contract? _____ Is she forcing you to bid again

No _____ She has at least 5 diamonds, but not enough points to force you to bid again, so she rebids her first suit at the lowest possible level.

This, most likely, is too difficult a bidding scenario to continue, because no trump suit has been agreed upon. You will encounter easier situations, for example, in the practice hands.

One more example: Your hand: A K 10 7 5 3 K J 5 4 K Q 3

Partner opens 1D and you respond 1S. Partner then bids 2C. Should you bid 2S? _____

Why not? _____

OK, let's practice.