

## 2-over-1 System – 1NT Forcing Convention

The Forcing Notrump convention is an integral part of every 2-over-1 forcing-to-game system. It's used by responder to describe a wide range of hands that have less than game-forcing values (5-11 pts.). This bid is used primarily in the two-over-one bidding system, which we will be discussing for the next 3-4 weeks.

### Responder's first bid:

If partner opens 1H or 1S and RHO passes, make your natural raise or 1-level response if available. With other hands, you can bid the Forcing 1NT to show:

- 5-11 points *and*
- No 4-card suit you can show at the 1-level (1S response to partner's 1H opening) *and*
- A hand without 3+-card support for partner's major.  
*Exception:* Bid 1NT first to describe a 3-card limit raise (10-11 pts. and 3 trumps).

If you play constructive raises (1H-2H promises 8-10 support points), you can also use Forcing Notrump auctions to show weaker 3-card raises. In the auction 1H-1NT-2C-2H, responder is showing either a doubleton heart *or* 3 hearts with bare-minimum values (fewer than 8 support points).

### Opener's second bid:

After you open 1H or 1S and partner responds 1NT, you must bid again to allow him to complete the description of his hand. Your rebid will show your strength and tell partner something about your hand pattern. If you have extra length in your major or you hold a 4+-card side suit, you'll be making a natural, descriptive rebid. With many other types of hands, though, you may have to bid a 3-card minor. Here are your options for your rebid:

#### 12-15 pts:

- Rebid your major if you hold 6+ cards in the suit.
- Bid 2H (if you opened 1S and hold a 4+-card heart suit).
- Bid 2 of your longer minor with all other hands. This promises only 3+ cards in the suit.

#### 16-18 pts.:

- Rebid 3 of your major if you have a strong 6+-card suit -- invitational (partner can pass).
- Raise to 2NT if your hand is balanced or semi-balanced and you have 17-18 pts. (or a *very* strong 16 pts.) -- invitational.
- Make a reverse to 2S (if you opened 1H and hold a 4-card spade suit) – forcing.
- Bid 2 of your longer minor with all other hands – not forcing.

#### 18 or more pts.:

- Raise to 3NT if your hand is semi-balanced and you have 19+ pts. (or a *very* strong 18 pts.).
- Make a reverse to 2S (if you opened 1H and hold a 4-card spade suit) -- forcing.
- Make a strong jump-shift to 3 of a new suit (shows a 4+-card suit) – forcing.

When you rebid your major or raise notrump, you pinpoint your high-card strength. Bids of new suits have a much wider range. After 1S-1NT, your rebid of 2C, 2D or 2H could be made with as many as 16-17 high-card points. Partner can pass these rebids, but if he has a good responding hand (9+ pts.), he'll often stretch to bid again to keep the auction open for you. This will allow you to show your extra strength if you have it.

### If you hold a 6-4 hand:

After 1S-1NT, you have a dilemma when you hold a hand like ♠KJ10854 ♥K74 ♦AJ83 ♣3. Do you show your extra length in spades or do you bid the diamond suit?

If you have a bare minimum, you'll usually want to rebid your 6-card major, especially if your 4-card suit is a minor. This limits your point-count right away and simplifies the auction. If you have 6 spades and 4 hearts, it may be important to get the other major into the auction, so you can base your decision on suit quality. With weak spades and decent hearts -- a hand like ♠K108654 ♥KQ93 ♦42 ♣A -- rebid 2H.

With a powerhouse hand (18+ pts.), you can make a jump-shift into your second suit to force partner to bid again. The problem hand is one with moderate extra values (15-17 pts.). To show this strength, bid 2 of your 4-card suit and hope partner can bid again. If he does, you can then show your extra values by making a game-try bid.

For example, after 1S-1NT, rebid just 2S with ♠AQ9864 ♥743 ♦2 ♣AJ82. If you instead hold ♠AQ9864 ♥A74 ♦2 ♣AJ82, rebid 2C. If partner takes a preference to 2S, you can invite game with 3S. If he bids 2H, you'll raise to 3H. If he bids 2D, you'll bid 2S to show your extra length and strength (partner will know you have extra values because with 6 spades and a minimum, you would have rebid 2S over 1NT).

### Responder's second bid:

After opener's rebid, you'll clarify your strength. You have several ways to describe hands in two different point ranges.

#### With a weak hand (5-9 pts.):

- **Pass** = Shows a clear preference for that suit. If partner's rebid was 2C or 2D, you should have at least 4-card support to pass. If partner's rebid was 2H (after opening 1S), you can pass with 3-card support.
- Retreat to 2 of partner's major (1S – 1NT – 2C – **2S**) = Preference with doubleton support.
- Make a non-jump bid in a new suit (1S - 1NT - 2D - **2H** or **3C**) = Long suit (6+-cards at the 3-level; strong 5+ cards at the 2-level).

#### With an invitational hand (10-11 pts.):

- Bid **2NT** = Stoppers in unbid suits, no fit for partner's major.
- Jump in partner's major (1S – 1NT – 2C – **3S**) = 3-card support.
- Raise partner's major rebid (1S – 1NT – 2S – **3S**) or (1S – 1NT – 2H – **3H**) = Support.
- Raise partner's minor rebid (1S – 1NT – 2C – **3C**) = 5+-card support, unbalanced distribution (lack of stoppers for a notrump rebid).
- Bid the "Impossible 2S" (1H – 1NT – 2C/2D – **2S**) = Similar to a 2NT rebid, but with good support for partner's minor. The bid is "impossible" (and therefore artificial) because you would have responded 1S if you held 4+ cards in that suit.
- Jump in a new suit (1S - 1NT - 2C - 3D or **3H**) = Strong 6+-card suit, invitational (could be as few as 8 pts., depending on your suit strength).
- Bid **3NT** or **4 of partner's major** = Maximum response (11 pts.) that has improved in value because of what you learned from opener's rebid.

#### Notes:

The Forcing NT is used *only* after partner opens 1H or 1S. The auctions 1C-1NT and 1D-1NT are natural and not forcing.

The Forcing NT is "off" in competition. If your RHO bids or doubles, your 1NT response reverts to its natural, non-forcing meaning (7-10 pts. with stoppers in the opponent's suit).

This summary recommends that a 1NT response is forcing for one round and denies forcing-to-game values. Some pairs choose to play the 1NT response as unlimited by an unpassed hand. Others play it as semi-forcing (opener can pass with a balanced 12 or 13 pts.). These are areas for partnership discussion.

#### If you're a passed hand:

- A 1NT response is "semi-forcing". Opener is allowed to pass if he has a balanced minimum.
- You cannot force to game. Partner is allowed to pass any response.
- If you make a 2-over-1 in a new suit, it should always be a 5+-card suit, as partner may pass with a doubleton.
- A 1NT response by a passed hand always denies support for partner's major. If you have 3-card support, make a raise (5-9 pts.) or use the Drury Convention (10-11 pts.).