

Two Over One

This booklet is to help you learn the Two-Over-One bidding system. It has been taken from two sources, Bridge Hands, and Karen Walker's site. Some of the information from the two sources may be slightly different, but it's good to see that there is not 100% agreement on every bid. No attempt will be made to go over every conceivable difference in bidding that those who advocate this system play. It is not enough to simply say you play a system. Meanings of individual bids should be discussed with your partner.

Before you begin to learn this system, be sure you and your partner have a clear understanding of how you play these bids now. Many of these bids will still mean exactly the same thing in 2/1.

1S 2C
1S 2H
1S 3C
1S 1NT
1D 2C
1C 2C
1C 1D
1C 1S
1C 1NT

What would this sequence mean? (Opponents are passing)

1S 1NT
2D 3C

1S 1NT
2NT

Background of 2/1

Where did the 2/1 systems originate and what was its original purpose? In the 1950's, the Italian Blue Team dominated the world of bridge in major international tournaments. The Italians, who were also excellent card players, used a potent system based on a strong artificial club system. Teams from other countries identified the need for better methods to compete with dated systems such as Standard American. Alvin Roth and Tobias Stone developed a comprehensive system which employed a new gadget – the Forcing Notrump bid by responder. Edgar Kaplan and Alfred Sheinwold. Followed with their own system, capitalizing on some of the best features of the Roth-Stone constructive bidding structure. Features from the Roth-Stone system were also adapted to the 2/1 system we know today. The Roth-Stone system featured 5-card majors, the Forcing Notrump response to the 1 Heart or 1 Spade opening bid.

Some of the Roth-Stone methods were easily adopted to fit in the Standard American system. Among these, the principal features were 5-card majors, negative doubles, and the Forcing Notrump response to a major suit opening. At that time, the Western United States predominantly played 4-card majors while on the Eastern United States players typically adhered to the 5-card majors, finding it easy to incorporate the Forcing Notrump methods – their methods became known as 'Eastern Scientific.'

In the 1970's, the partnership of Richard and Rhoda Walsh, John Swanson, and Paul Soloway developed a variant of Eastern Scientific system that incorporated a "two over one" (2/1) game forcing response by an unpassed hand (and no interference). The new system was originally known as Walsh, sometimes referred to as 'Western Roth-Stone' based on its California origination. Over time, the Walsh system was commonly referred to as 2/1 Game Force.

Max Hardy was the first professional player to thoroughly describe the 2/1 system and published several books on the system. Later, the prolific bridge writer Mike Lawrence published his works on the 2/1 system. Over time, other notable bridge experts have published books on aspects of 2/1, including Marty Bergen, Paul Thurston, and others. Variations to 2/1 methods are also described in periodicals as 'Bridge World Standard.'

Over time, the benefits of the 2/1 system were noted by other tourney players. Of today's leading duplicate players who use natural bidding, the majority play some version of the 2/1 system. Your ability to play 2/1 will increase the number of potential partners willing to play with you. Even if you do not choose to play 2/1, many of your opponents are using 2/1; having a working knowledge of their methods will help you with your bidding and play.

Basic 2/1 Bidding Strategy

- 1) Find an 8+ major card “golden fit” using methods similar to those used by Standard American players. However, when the responder makes a two-level bid in a lower ranking suit than the opener, the bid signifies the responder has 12+ points and is making a game forcing bid.
- 2) Discover notrump stoppers without a golden fit – most players also use a “temporizing” Notrump response as a prelude to show a modest trump fit with the opener. When the responder makes a 1 Notrump bid in response to opener’s 1H or 1S bid, the response promises a wide range response of 5+ to 12 points – this bid is forcing for one round
- 3) Consider an alternative minor suit contract. Since the partners require additional strength to make game in a minor, these contracts are considered as a last resort when major suit or Notrump contracts are not appropriate.
- 4) The 1 Notrump and 2 Notrump bids, usually 15-17 and 20-21 points precisely describe opener’s strength and shape, identical to the Standard American treatment.
- 5) 2/1 emphasizes finding major suit fit at a low level with methods such as “slow shows, fast denies” bids by responder. Many 2/1 players have extended this approach through their methods. For instance, responses to opener’s bid include:
 - a. Opener’s raise of responder’s major suit response usually shows 4-card support.
 - b. Responder’s 1 Notrump response by an unpassed hand to opener’s 1H or 1S opening is forcing for one round. This treatment is at the core of the 2/1 system.
 - c. Responder’s 2/1 response by an unpassed hand forms a game-forcing auction. This “slow shows-fast denies” approach allows the partners to conserve space, preventing unnecessary jumps to force game. Thus, avoiding fast arrival preserves precious bidding space to explore slam.

Basic 2/1 Bids

The 2/1 game forcing auction applies to responder’s first bid. Early in our bridge career we learned to bid game when our combined partnership assets are 25-26 or more points. Ideally, these assets will sustain 10 tricks in a major or 9 tricks in Notrump. Again, a fundamental construct of the 2/1 system is the philosophy to quickly identify and communicate game-going partnership values without consuming excessive bidding space. With responder hands that are 10-12 points (or a questionable 13 points with several queens and Jacks), consider the Forcing Notrump bid discussed in the next Chapter.

The basic rules for 2/1 game forcing auctions

- 1) When partner opens 1H or 1S, you bid 2 of a lower suit (2C, 2D, 2H if 1S). Typically, responder’s suit is a 5+ cards long. On some occasions, responder’s suit contains 4 cards, and on rare occasions the responder may need to make a 2/1 minor suit response with a 3-4-3-3 distribution. Here are the 6 game forcing bids:
 - a. 1H – 2C
 - b. 1H – 2D
 - c. 1S – 2C Could be as few as 3 Clubs, holding 3=4=3=3 distribution
 - d. 1S – 2D
 - e. 2S – 2H Responder also promises 5+ hearts
 - f. 1D – 2C Agreed by most 2/1 players as game forcing (at least 4 minor)
- 2) The responder makes a two level game forcing bid in a lower suit with 12+ “good” points.

Thus, the 2/1 system requires a bidding mechanism to describe responder hands that have “in-between” values: those holdings in the 10-12 point range. Recall that using Standard American bidding, responder could make a two over one bid showing invitational values – not so with the 2/1 system. As we will see later, the responders Forcing One Notrump bid covers the range of 5+ to 12 points to address this need.

Auctions that are not 2/1 game forcing auctions

- 1) The 2 level bidder is a passed hand (since responder’s pass limited the hand to 12 or less)
 - a. P – 1H; 2C
 - b. P – 1S; 2H
- 2) The opponents have made an intervening bid:
 - a. 1H – (1S) – 2C; Most 2/1 players advocate “systems off” when an opponent makes an intervening bid.
 - b. 1H – (X) – 2D
 - c. 1H/S – (any) – 3C/D; Responder jump bids are typically preemptive, depending on partnership agreement
 - d. 1S – (2D) – 2H
 - e. 1H – (P) – 2C – (2D); 2/1 game force is still on here, since the 2/1 auction was established before the opponent bid

- 3) Simple raises
 - a. 1H – 2H;
 - b. 1D – 2D; Most 2/1 players treat the raise of a minor with a conventional treatment (Inverted Minors) – refer to 2/1 Module 2.
- 4) Jump responses and jump shifts
 - a. 1S – 3S; invitational or preemptive, depending on partnership agreement
 - b. 1H – 2S; weak or strong, depending on partnership agreement
 - c. 1D – 2H; similar scenario as above
- 5) Notrump response
 - a. 1H – 1N; Forcing Notrump auctions are distinct – refer to the chapter discussing Forcing Notrump auctions
 - b. 1S – 2N; most play this as a conventional bid, as Jacoby 2NT
- 6) Partnership dependent: 1D – 2C
 - a. Most 2/1 players agree responder's 2C bid is game forcing.
 - b. Some play repeated minor suit rebids signifies a signoff attempt below game.

Exercise: For each question assume opener opened in an unspecified major and decide whether or not to make a game-forcing 2 level bid:

- 1) A K 3 2 K 10 2 K J 3 2 3 2
- 2) 3 2 3 2 J 2 A K J 5 4 3 2
- 3) A Q 3 2 A 2 A Q 4 3 2 3 2
- 4) 4 3 2 A Q 2 A Q J A K 3 2
- 5) A K 2 2 K Q J 4 3 2 4 3 2
- 6) A J 3 2 3 2 Q 5 4 3 2 K 2
- 7) 3 2 4 3 2 A Q 3 2 K Q 3 2
- 8) 4 3 2 K Q 2 K 3 2 A 4 3 2
- 9) 2 2 A K Q 4 3 2 K Q J 10 2
- 10) Why are these bidding scenarios not game forcing?
 - a. P – 1S; 2H
 - b. 1H – (2C) – 2D
 - c. 1S – 3S;

Answers: On some of these hands, the 2/1 bidders would use conventional responses we have not discussed. This exercise is only to determine if a 2/1 bid is appropriate. Later we will learn specific conventions that apply to some of these hands.

- 1) A K 3 2 K 10 2 K J 3 2 3 2 – With 14 points, responder should make a game forcing bid in response to major suit. The 2D response is game forcing, showing responder's side suit.
- 2) 3 2 3 2 J 2 A K J 5 4 3 2 – With 9 high card points, the responder cannot make a 2 level bid. Later, we shall discuss the two bidding styles to describe this type of hand (as 1S – 1N; 2H – 3C, or 1S – 3C)
- 3) A Q 3 2 A 2 A Q 4 3 2 3 2 – With 14 points, we want to force game. First bid 2C as a temporizing bid, supporting Spades later if opened. Many 2/1 players would use the Jacoby 2NT convention in response to opener's 1S bid, a convention discussed in another lesson.
- 4) 4 3 2 A Q 2 A Q J A K 3 2 – With 20 points, responder forces game bidding 2C. If opener bid 1H, we plan to support the suit later. While responder is interested in exploring slam, the 2C bid is at least game forcing so responder need not worry about opener passing.
- 5) A K 2 2 K Q J 4 3 2 4 3 2 – With 13 points, the responder commits to partnership to game, bidding 2D for starters. We will avoid the merits of conventional bids at this time (Jacoby 2NT or Splinter bids).
- 6) A J 3 2 3 2 Q 5 4 3 2 K 2 – With 10 points, responder cannot make a game forcing bid if opener bid 1S. Depending on partnership methods, responder either raises the bidding to 3S or makes a conventional response to show extra support (Bergen or Hardy Raise). If opener bid 1H, responder bids 1S in an attempt to locate a partnership fit – responder's raise in a new suit is one-round forcing. Stay tuned for detailed discussions about raises.
- 7) 3 2 4 3 2 A Q 3 2 K Q 3 2 – With 11 points, the responder cannot make a 2/1 game forcing bid. We will learn about the 1NT forcing bid in the next chapter.
- 8) 4 3 2 K Q 2 K 3 2 A 4 3 2 – With 12 points, responder is nearing game values. However, responder should not make a game forcing 2/1 bid with these values, particularly with a flat 3=3=3=4 distribution and spread values.
- 9) 2 2 A K Q 4 3 2 K Q J 10 2 – With 15 points, responder should bid 2D as a game forcing bid looking to find the best contract in follow-up bidding.
- 10)
 - a. P – 1S; 2H Responder is a passed hand – not game forcing but promises a rebid
 - b. 1H – (2C) – 2D Opponent made an intervening bid – not game forcing but promises a rebid
 - c. 1S – 3S; Suit raises, jump or otherwise, are not forcing; opener may pass a limit raise

Forcing Notrump

As we previously discussed, the 2/1 bid by responder is game forcing. Yet after the opener bids 1H or 1S (unpassed hand), the responder needs a method to describe hands such as those with 10 – 11 and “bad” 12 point hands. The Forcing Notrump allows the responder to make an interim “catch all” bid with a greater range of values than the 3 point range associated with most bids.

The range of responder’s Forcing Notrump is 5+ (good) to 12- (bad) points. As its name suggests, the bid is forcing one round, assume responder is not a passed hand; some play “semi forcing” bids, which will be discussed later. The Forcing Notrump bid requires partner to further describe features of the opener’s hand – recall opener’s range is very large: 12 – 22 points. Of course, responder can still make a natural bid of 1S with 4+ Spades over opener’s 1H bid.

Here are some of the responder’s benefits of the Forcing Notrump approach:

1. Better describe balanced hands with invitational strength
2. Precisely show a weak hand with a long suit
3. Belatedly show modest fit with opener after learning more of combined assets
4. Steer clear of many questionable 2/1 bids with only invitational values
5. Find a low-level part score when partners do not have a fit.

When partner opens 1S, the responder has a limited number of options which we respond in this sequence:

1. Pass, with less than a good 5 or 6 point hand
2. Raise opener’s Spade suit, with 3+ in opener’s major
3. Bid a new suit at the 2 level or higher. If responder’s bid is at the 2 level, the 2/1 response is game forcing.
4. Respond in Notrump, when we cannot make one of the above bids.

Note that when the opener specifically bids 1S, responder’s 1 Notrump bid does not promise any Spades – with 6-11 points and no Spade support, the responder must use the Forcing Notrump as a “catch-all” bid.

When partner opens 1H, the responder has the opportunity to bid 1S in addition to the above guidelines. Thus, should responder bid 1N in response to 1H, the responder typically holds at least 2 Hearts (otherwise, with bidding 1S with 4+ Spades since 3=1=4=5 and 3=1=5=4 hands are rare).

If partner is a passed hand, partner’s 1 Notrump response is not forcing; many players choose to play responder’s bid as “semi-forcing.”

Above we noted that opener must have 6+ cards in major to rebid the suit when responder bids a Forcing Notrump (but not so with a 2/1 bid), or needs 17+ HCP to reverse from 1H to 2S. Assuming opener does not open 1N with a 5 card major, the rebid is:

More likely 2-3 in Minor (rounded suit shape – bad)
1H – 1N; 2C

Less likely 2-3 in Minor (pointed suit shape – good)
1S – 1N; 2D

In-between (same color suits – ok)
1H – 1N; 2D
or
1S – 1N; 2C

Let's assume the responder bids the Forcing 1 Notrump. This shows at least a good 5 point hand up to a bad 12 point hand. Here is a listing of Opener's rebids:

If auction begins 1S – 1N;		
Opener's Rebid	HCP Strength	Length in Suit/s
2C/D – Non-forcing	12 -18	3+
2H – Non-forcing	12 – 18	4+
2S – Non-forcing	12 – 15	Promises 6+ (or 5 with 100 honors")
2N – Invitational	17 – 18 Standard* (some play exact HCP)	5-3-3-2 shape
3C/D – Forcing Jump Shift	19 – 21	4+ Game Forcing
3H – Forcing Jump Shift	19+	4+ Game Forcing
3S – Invitational	16 – 17	Promises 6+ (or 5 with 100 honors")
3N – Forcing	19	5-3-3-2 shape
4S	12+ 14+	8+ Spades 7+ Spades
If auction begins 1H – 1N;		
2S – Forcing 1 Round	17+	4+ Spades (Hearts longer than Spades)

Here are typical Opener rebids used after the Forcing 1 Notrump bidding:

1S – 1N;	Rebid
1. A Q 8 6 4 Q 4 K J 3 7 5 3	2C
2. A K 10 8 6 K 8 4 J 2 K J 5	2C
3. A K 9 6 3 J 7 A K 4 K 10 9 6	2C
4. A J 8 7 3 2 9 5 3 A K J 8	2C
5. 8 7 5 3 2 A 5 A Q J 3 5	2D
6. Q 10 9 3 2 A K 10 7 5 3 K 4	2D
7. A Q 4 3 2 K 10 9 3 K 5 K 4	2H
8. K Q 10 8 6 A J 10 9 3 7 7 2	2H
9. A 10 7 6 5 4 A 6 J 4 K J 5	2S
10. A Q 9 7 6 K J 4 A Q Q 10 9	2N
11. A J 10 8 7 K Q K J 6 A 9 8	2N
12. A K J 5 2 9 A 6 K Q 10 9 5	3C
13. A K 10 5 4 A J 3 10 A K 3 2	3C

14. AKJ92 AQ1095 - KQ6	3H
15. AQJ86 AKQ7 A8 J4	3H
16. AQJ1094 32 AQ K54	3S
17. AKQ6543 K86 107 9	3S
18. AKQ107 KQ3 93 KJ9	3N
Note: If auction begins:	
1H – 1N;	
19. AQ87 AQ543 86 92	2C (cannot reverse without 17+)

Responder Rebids after Opener's Forcing Notrump and Opener's 2 level Suit Bid		
Opener's Rebid	Responder's Hand	Responder's Rebid
2 of Minor Suit	5 – 8 HCP, no better bid	Pass
	2+ in Opener's Major Suit with 5 – 10 HCP, or 3+ in Opener's Major Suit with shape & 2 trick source	2 in Opener's Major Suit
2 of Major Suit (non-reverse)	No Opener fit but 10 – 12 HCP w/stoppers	2N
	4-5+ Opener's Minor Suit 10-12 HCP playing points	3 in Opener's Minor Suit
	3 in Opener's Major Suit 10-12 playing points	3+ in Opener's Major Suit
	5 – 9 points and 5-6+ card suit	New Suit at 2 Level (signoff)
	5 – 11 points and Good 6+ card suit	New Suit at 3 Level – nonjump (signoff)
	10 – 11 points and Good 6+ card suit	New Suit at 3 Level – jump (invitational)

Note: Bidding the "Impossible 2S" (1H – 1N; 2x – 2S) is an artificial/conventional bid.

Typical partnership agreements use this specialized call to show difficult-to-bid invitational hands; one method instructs opener to bid 2N, after which responder shows a good 5+ card minor with 10-12 playing points (1H – 1N; 2D – 3C would be a signoff)

Here are typical Responder rebids used after the Forcing 1 Notrump bidding:

	1H – 1N; 2C - ?	Rebid
1.	5 KJ3 97532 J9 52	Pass
2.	4 9732 KQ7532 108	2D
3.	- KJ7632 Q5 42 743	2H
4.	97 A542 KJ85 J97	2S
5.	104 KQ72 KJ95 Q63	2N
6.	8 AQ3 1093 KQ976	3C
7.	32 A7 KQ10953 J32	3D
8.	Q86 753 KQ92 A104	3S
	1S – 1N; 2D – ?	
9.	9 J9543 A52 Q876	Pass
10.	- KQ8732 975 8542	2H
11.	Q9 J94 8732 AQ94	2S
12.	3 J75 AQ973 A109	3D
	1S – 1N; 2H – ?	
13.	- 982 A9732 Q643	Pass
14.	32 54 10653 AQ876	2S
15.	K 54 106532 AQ876	2S
16.	8 J72 AQJ9 KJ985	2N
17.	96 KQ106 KJ95 532	3H
18.	KQ4 5 7652 AJ1093	3S

From http://bridgehands.com/Conventions/Two_Over_One.htm

2-over-1 System – 1NT Forcing Convention (Walker)

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.).

Based on information from <http://www.prairienet.org/bridge/1ntforce>

Basics of 2-over-1—Part 1 (Walker)

The general approach is just as the name suggests: If responder's first bid is 2 of a new suit (1S by opener – 2C, 2D or 2H by responder), it sets up a forcing auction; the partnership must bid on to game level. This is different from old-fashioned Standard American, where a 2-level response promises a good 10+ points, but it is not forcing to game.

The main advantage with this system is that it saves bidding room. After making the initial 2-level response, responder doesn't have to jump to show forcing-to-game values. Because the auction can stay low, opener and responder have more room to exchange information below game level.

2-over-1 forcing-to-game is “on” **only** when your side opens 1H or 1S in 1st or 2nd seat **and** the next player passes **and** responder makes a non-jump bid of 2 of a new suit. The only relevant auctions are:

1♥-2♣ 1♥-2♦ 1♠-2♣ 1♠-2♦ 1♠-2♥

2-over-1 meanings are “off” when:

- Opener is in 3rd or 4th seat. A passed hand cannot force to game.
- Your opponent (responder's RHO) makes an overcall or double. In competition, all of responder's bids revert to their standard meanings:
After an intervening overcall, responder's new-suit bid shows a long suit and decent values, but it is not forcing to game. It could be as few as 8-9 pts. If you have a strong suit.
After an intervening double, responder's 2-level bid of a new suit is weak (5-9 pts.).
After an overcall *or* a double, a 1NT response is standard (7-10 pts. With a stopper) and is not forcing.

Game level is defined as 3NT or 4 of a suit. If your trump suit is a major, the “4-of-a-suit” agreement will get you to game. Note, though, that if your trump suit is a minor, you are **not** forced all the way to 5C or 5D. Even if you've made a 2-over-1 response, your auction can end at 4C or 4D if that's your agreed suit.

A 2-over-1 response is just **one** of the ways you can show game values. You do **not** have to make a 2-over-1 with all game-forcing hands.

Playing the 2-over-1 system does not affect the meanings of other auctions. One-level responses (1H-1S) and direct raises of partner's suit (single, limit and forcing) have the same meanings as in standard bidding. Other conventions and treatments – strong or weak jump shifts, Bergen raises, Jacoby 2NT, splinter bids, New Minor Forcing, etc. – can be included in your 2-over-1 system with no modifications.

2-over-1 variations

There are several ways to structure your 2-over-1 system. The most widely used approaches are the systems proposed by bridge writers Mike Lawrence and Max Hardy. The two systems are similar, but they differ in the meanings of some of opener's rebids. The Lawrence system also makes more exceptions to the always-forcing-to-game rule. The summary here is based largely on the Lawrence approach.

Questions to ask your 2-over-1 partner:

- Do you play “Hardy style” or “Lawrence style”? Most of the recommendations here are based on Lawrence style.
- Is 1D-2C forcing to game? **Recommendation:** No
- Does the **Forcing** 1NT response deny opening-bid values? **Recommendation:** Yes
- Does opener's rebid of his suit guarantee a 6+-card suit? (1H-2D-2H) **Recommendation:** No
- Does opener's raise of responder's suit show extra values? (1H-2C-3C) **Recommendation:** Yes
Note: “Extra values” should be around 16+ playing points with 4+-card support.
- Does opener's 2-level reverse rebid show extra values? (1H-2C-2S) **Recommendation:** Yes
- Does opener's high-level reverse rebid (3 of a new suit) show extra values? (1H-2D-3C) **Recommendation:** Yes
- If responder rebids his suit (1S-2C-2S-3C), is it forcing? **Recommendation:** Yes (Hardy style), if you want to keep your system as simple as possible. No (Lawrence style), if you want a more flexible structure.

Responder's first bid

Your priorities for your first response:

First: Make the appropriate raise of partner's major if you have 4-card support (single, limit or forcing raise) **OR** 3-card support with 5-10 pts. (single raise). The only supporting hand that will **not** make an immediate raise is one with 3-card support and a good 10+ pts. (Note: Some partners agree to play a single raise as 8-10 HCP and use the Forcing NT with support and 5-7 HCP.)

Second: If you don't have a supporting hand, show a 4-card spade suit (respond 1S to a 1H opening). (Some partners agree to have a 1S bid show a 5-card suit and use a Forcing NT instead.)

Third: If you have game-forcing values, bid a new suit at the 2-level. "Game forcing" is usually 12+ points, but it should be interpreted as any hand that you would have opened **or** that's worth 12+ pts. Because of a fit for partner's suit.

After partner opens 1 of a major suit:

A **2C** or **2D** response shows a 4+-card suit. In rare cases, though, 2C may be a 3-card suit.

A **2H** response (1S-2H) promises a 5+-card suit.

If you play Lawrence-style 2-over-1, you can bid 2 of a minor if you have 10-11 pts. And a 6+-card suit.

Fourth: With all other hands (5-11 pts. Without support **OR** 10-11 pts. With 3-card support), bid the Forcing Notrump.

Based on information at <http://www.prairienet.org/bridge/2over1.htm>

Basics of 2-over-1—Part 2 (Walker)

Raising partner's major

Here's a summary of your bidding options when you have 3+-card support for partner's opening bid of 1H or 1S.

With a balanced hand:

- 3+ trumps & 5-10 pts. = Make a direct raise (1H-2H). (Some partners play this 8-10)
- 4+ trumps & 10-12 support pts. = Make a direct limit raise (1H-3H).
- 3 trumps & 10-11 pts. = Use the Forcing Notrump convention, then jump to 3 of partner's suit.
- 3 trumps & 12-13 pts. = Make a 2-over-1, then jump to game in partner's suit – 1H-2C-2NT-4H.
You can also use this approach when you have 4 trumps and you want to emphasize values in a strong side suit. Be aware, though, that if you use this "delayed" raise, it will be almost impossible to convince partner that you have more than 3 trumps.
- 3 trumps & 14+ pts. = Make a 2-over-1, then make a minimum rebid in partner's suit – 1H-2C-2NT-3H.
- 3 trumps & 15-17 pts. In a 4-3-3-3 hand (where the 4-card suit is a minor) = Respond 3NT. This use of 3NT is a special treatment that is not standard; it's a point for discussion with your partner.
- 4+ trumps & 13+ support pts. = Make a forcing raise (Jacoby 2NT).

With an unbalanced hand (singleton or void):

- 3+ trumps & 5-10 pts. = Make a direct raise (1H-2H).
- 4+ trumps & 10-12 support pts. = Make a direct limit raise (1H-3H).
- 3 trumps & 10-11 pts. = Use the Forcing Notrump convention, then jump to 3 of partner's suit.
- 3 trumps & 12-13 pts. = Make a 2-over-1 bid in a new suit. If partner shows a minimum (by rebidding 2 of his suit or 2NT), jump to game in partner's suit.
- 3 trumps & 14+ pts. = Make a 2-over-1, then make a minimum rebid in partner's suit (1S-2C-2NT-3S).
Or if partner rebids his suit, you can show your raise and singleton with a splinter bid (1S-2C-2S-4D).
- 4+ trumps & 13+ support pts. = Make an immediate splinter bid.

Follow-up auctions

Opener's second bid:

One of the common misconceptions about 2-over-1 auctions is that after the forcing-to-game response, neither partner has to jump to show extra values. This is only half right. The general guideline is that responder does not jump with strong hands, but opener may.

In most 2-over-1 auctions, responder is the “captain” because he has more information about opener's hand than opener has about his. When responder has a strong hand, he chooses forcing, low-level rebids to give opener maximum room to provide information. Responder tends to be the “asker” and opener is the “teller”.

If opener bids weak and strong hands the same way, responder will never be able to make an intelligent decision about how high to bid. For this reason, it's important for opener to communicate his strength as early as possible in the auction. To do this, opener makes **value bids** that show whether or not he has a minimum hand – he bids less with less, and more with more.

- To show a minimum: Make a **low-level rebid** in your suit or notrump (1H-2C-**2H** or **2NT**).
- To show extra values: Make a **jump** (1H-2C-**3H** or **3NT**), a reverse bid (1H-2C-**2S**) or any bid at the 3-level (1H-2D-**3C**, **3D**).
- To show 18+ balanced: Rebid 2NT, then show your extra strength later (1H-2C-**2NT-3NT-4NT**).
- Other new-suit bids at the 2-level (1S-2C-**2D** or **2H**) are natural, but don't define your strength.

Suppose, for example, that you open 1S with ♠AKJ1087 ♥A62 ♦KJ8 ♣7 and partner responds 2C. If you follow the “never-jump” rule and rebid just 2S, you've kept the auction low, but you've concealed your strength. It's worth using up an extra level of bidding if it accurately describes your hand, so you should make the value bid (3S) with this hand.

Note, though, that you can take advantage of the low-level rebid when you have a hard-to-describe hand such as ♠AJ6543 ♥AK2 ♦KJ8 ♣7. Since you don't want to over-emphasize such a weak spade suit, you can rebid 2S with this hand and then show your extra values later.

After 1H by you – 2D by partner, here are the meanings for your second bid:

- Rebid of your major (**2H**) = Minimum (12-14 pts.). This may be only 5-card suit if your hand is unsuitable for 2NT (weakness in an unbid suit) or a new-suit rebid.
- **2S** = Extra values (15+ pts.) and a 4-card suit.
- **2NT** = Balanced minimum (12-14 pts.) with stoppers in unbid suits **OR** 18+ balanced.
- Non-jump bid of 3 of a new suit (**3C**) = Extra values (15+ pts.) and a 4+-card suit.
- Raise of partner's suit (**3D**) = Extra values (16+ playing points) with support (4+ cards).
- 3 of your major (**3H**) = Extra values (14-15+ pts.) and a strong 6+-card suit.
- **3NT** = Extra values (15-17 pts.) with balanced distribution.
- Jump in a new suit (**3S** or **4C**) = Extra values, good support and a singleton in the suit bid (splinter).
- Jump to game in your major (**4H**) = Minimum (11-13 pts.) with a long, solid suit.
- **4NT** = **Keycard Blackwood** for partner's suit.

Based on information at <http://www.prairienet.org/bridge/2over1.htm>

Basics of 2-over-1—Part 3 (Walker)

Responder's second bid:

Responder goes “slow” when he has extra values; he uses **fast-arrival bids** when he has a minimum. A low-level rebid in opener's suit (*slow* – 1S-2C-2NT-**3S**) suggests extra values (14+ pts.) and gives opener more room to describe his hand. A jump to game in opener's suit (*fast* – 1S-2C-2NT-**4S**) shows a minimum (12-13 pts.) with no interest in slam.

After 1H by partner – 2D by you – 2H by partner, the meanings of your second bid are:

- Minimum bid of partner's major (**3H**) = Extra values (14+ pts.) with 3-card support,
- Jump to game (**3NT** or **4H**) = Minimum (12-13 pts.)
- **2NT** = Unlimited; tends to be balanced with stoppers; asks for more information.
- Rebid of your suit (**3D**) = 6+-card suit and invitational (Lawrence style). If you play Hardy style, this rebid is unlimited and forcing.
- New suit (**2S** or **3C**) = Unlimited; could be artificial; asks opener for more information.
- Jump in a new suit (**3S** or **4C**) = Splinter raise (trump support [usually 3 cards] and a singleton in the suit bid).
- **4NT** = Key-card Blackwood for partner's suit. If opener's rebid was 2NT, 4NT is quantitative.

Opener's third bid:

If responder has made a bid that asks for more information (1H – 2D – 2H – **2S**, **2NT** or **3C**), he denies 3+-card support for your suit. He often needs to know more about your hand to choose the contract. To provide this information, you can:

- Rebid your major (**3H**) if you have a good 6-card suit (since your 2H rebid did not guarantee 6 cards).
- Jump to game in your suit (**4H**) to show a strong (but usually not solid) 7+-card suit.
- Show 3-card support for partner's minor (**3D**).
- Raise to **3NT** (over 2NT) with a balanced minimum.
- Bid notrump (over partner's new-suit bid) if you have a stopper in the unbid suit.
- Bid the fourth suit if you have 4+-cards in the suit and do not have a suitable hand for notrump.

If partner's second bid was a low-level raise of your suit (1H – 2C – 2H – **3H**), he's showing a “good” 2-over-1 with 3-card support and at least mild interest in a slam. You can:

- Bid game (**4H**) with a dead minimum. Partner's 3H does not “demand” a cuebid from you.
- Cuebid a new suit (**3S** or **4C**) to show an ace and at least mild interest in slam.
- Bid partner's suit (**4D**) to show a moderate fit and/or a high honor and interest in slam.
- Bid **3NT** to show interest in slam and nothing to cuebid. This asks partner for a cuebid.

Guidelines for cuebidding and ace-asking

- Responder's “low raise” (1H-2C-2NT-**3H**) shows at least moderate extra values, but it does not demand a cuebid. Opener should make a cuebid only if he has more than a dead minimum.
- If opener makes an early cuebid in responder's 2-over-1 suit (1H-2C-2NT-3H-**4C**), it should show a fitting card (ace, king or queen), usually with moderate support (doubleton or better). It does not necessarily promise a first-round control.

- Other cuebids show a first-round control (ace or void). Bid your *cheapest* control. If your cuebid “skips” an unbid suit, it denies a control in that suit. In the auction 1H-2C-2NT-3H-4D, your 4D cuebid says you hold the diamond ace but not the club or spade aces.
- After you’ve found a major-suit fit (1S-2H-3C-3S), a bid of 3NT demands a cuebid. It is not a suggestion of a final contract.
- When cuebidding kings (second-round controls), treat a singleton as a second-round control.
- In auctions where you have not yet confirmed a fit, a 3-level bid of a new suit is *not* an ace-showing cuebid. Instead, it should be interpreted as a search for the right game. In the auction 1H-2D-2H-3C-3S, you haven’t agreed on a trump suit, so 3S cannot be a cuebid. If you held spade values, you would have bid 3NT here, so the 3S bid is asking partner for a spade stopper for notrump.
- If your agreed suit is a major, an unusual jump to 4S (if your suit is hearts) or the 5-level can be used as Exclusion Keycard Blackwood for the agreed (or implied) suit. In the auction 1H-2D-2H-4S or 5C is Exclusion, showing heart support and a void in the bid suit (a jump to 3S or 4C would be a splinter). Opener does *not* count the ace of partner’s void when he answers with his number of keycards.
- If your agreed suit is a minor, any jump to the 4-level can be used as Exclusion Keycard Blackwood – 1S-2C-3C-4D, 4H or 4S .
- 4NT is *not* Blackwood if:
 - It’s bid directly over opener’s first rebid of 2NT or 3NT – 1S-2C-2NT-4NT is quantitative, asking opener to bid 6NT
 - if he has maximum point-count (or pass with a minimum).
 - Opener rebids 2NT, then 4NT over 3NT – 1S-2C-2NT-3NT-4NT shows a balanced 18-19 pts.
- In all other auctions – and when in doubt – 4NT is Keycard Blackwood for the last-bid suit.

Based on information at <http://www.prairienet.org/bridge/2over1.htm>

Other 2/1 features

Use of the 2/1 system usually implies (at least) the following additional agreements:

- Five card majors, i.e. major suit openings require at least a five-card suit;
- Constructive raises of a major suit opening; i.e. 1S-2S shows 8-9 playing points in spades;
- Limit raises of major suit openings, i.e. the jump raise 1? – 3? or 1? – 3? shows a game-invitational hand with at least four-card support (unless Bergen raises are used);
- Inverted minor raises, in which a jump raise of a minor suit opening is a weak preemptive bid, while a single raise is strong and forcing for one round;
- Jacoby transfers over 1NT opening;
- Jacoby 2NT, showing strong support with 4 or more cards;
- Splinter bids;
- New minor forcing;
- Fourth suit forcing and artificial.

*Information compiled by Linda MacCleave
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