

Basics of 2-over-1—Part 1

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.