

The Two-Over-One (2/1) Game-Forcing Bidding System

With recent improvements and modification, the “**2-over-1, Game-Forcing**” bidding system has achieved great popularity in the United States. It is not a new bidding system, rather it is a variation or adaptation of the “**Standard American**,” 5-card Major system of bidding, with the main difference being the meaning and consequence of a 2-level, new-suit response by a Responder to Partner’s opening bid of one-of-a-Major

General Approach of the “2/1 Game-Forcing” Bidding System

The general approach is just as its name suggests: If Responder's first bid is a simple response (one absent a jump-response) of two of any new suit, (Example: **1D**, **1H** or **1S** by Opener, then **2C**, **2D** or **2H** by Responder), it sets up a forcing auction with the Partnership committed, under most circumstances, to, at least, a final, game-level contract, if not beyond. Game level is defined as **3-NT** or **4H** or **4S**. **Note:** If the agreed-upon suit is either Minor, the Partnership is not forced all the way to **5C** or **5D**. Even if a 2/1 response is bid, the auction can end at **4C** or **4D**, if necessary.

Responder’s 2-level, new suit response exhibits 12 or more high-card points and is, under most circumstances, game-forcing; whereas, in the “**Standard American**” bidding system, a 2-level, new-suit response promises a good 10 (+) high-card points, and is forcing for 1-round, but not to game. There are six (6) bidding auctions where the “**2/1 Game-Forcing**” principle applies; i.e., where Opener opens with **1D**, **1H**, or **1S**; the next Player “*Passes*,” and Responder, who is an “*un-passed*” Player, responds in a new suit at the 2-level, without jumping:
(1) **1S – P – 2C** (2) **1S – P – 2D** (3) **1S – P – 2H** (4) **1H – P – 2C** (5) **1H – P – 2D** and
(6) **1D – P – 2C** (**Note:** **1C – P – 2D/2H/2S** would evidence a jump-response by Responder, would not represent a simple response, and, therefore, not represent a “**2/1 Game-Forcing**” scenario.

Advantage and Disadvantage of the “2/1 Game-Forcing Bidding System

The main advantage with the “**2/1 Game-Forcing**” bidding system is that, absent a lack of concern that the bidding will end shy of a game-level contract, it therefore, facilitates and allows the Opener and Responder to exchange information below game-level with greater flexibility and comfort, thereby increasing the chances for achievement of an optimum game-level or slam-level final contract through increased sharing of information regarding both point-count and distribution between the Partners, and by conservation of bidding space .

One disadvantage of the “**2/1 Game-Forcing**” bidding system, however, is that there's no easy way to show many hands with invitational strength or less. To facilitate the bidding process where Responder holds fewer than 12 HCP’s, a conventional “**Forcing No-Trump**” is used subsequent to an opening bid of either **1H** or **1S**.

Basic Two-Over-One Principles

A. The game-forcing feature of this bidding system is "on" only when Opener opens **1D**, **1H** or **1S** in the 1st or 2nd seat, the next Player "*passes*," and Opener's responding Partner makes a non-jump bid of a new suit at the 2-level. The only six (6) relevant auctions where this becomes applicable are therefore:

1D – P - 2C 1H –P - 2C 1H - P - 2D 1S – P - 2C 1S – P - 2D 1S – P - 2H

When a Partnership is in a "**2/1 Game-Forcing**" auction, a "*slow arrival*" to game is stronger than a "*quick arrival*" to game, which is weaker.

B. The Two-Over-One Game-Force is "off" when:

1. Responder is a "*previously-passed*" Player.

2. There is an interim **Overcall** or **Take-Out Double** by Responder's right-hand Opponent (RHO). In competition, in the presence of an Overcall or Take-Out Double, Responder's bids revert back to their standard meanings, and the "**2/1 Game-Forcing**" principle is off. After an intervening Overcall, Responder's new-suit bid shows a long suit and decent values, but it is not forcing to game, and could represent as few as 10 high-card points. After an intervening Take-Out Double, Responder's Overcall shows fewer than 10 HCP's, since a "*Re-Double*," or some other conventional response like "*Jordan*" would be in order if Opener's responding Partner held 10 or more HCP's.

3. If the bidding has proceeded: **1H/1S – P – 2C/2D – P - 2H/2S – 3C/3D**, the re-bid by Responder of his/her Minor suit could hold 12-13 HCP's, and opposite this potential misfit, if Opener were to hold 6-cards in his/her Major with minimum opening values; Game is unlikely, and Responder's repeat of his/her Minor suit removes the game-forcing nature of the initial 2/1 sequence.

4. After an **Overcall** or a **Take-Out double** by the would-be Responder's right-hand Opponent, a **1-NT** response by Opener's responding Partner is standard (7-10 pts. with at least one stopper in the Overcaller's suit), and is not forcing.

5. In the "**2/1 Game-Forcing**" bidding system, "*Reverses*" do not exist!