

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 or a convention, rather it is a variation or adaptation of the “**Standard American**,” 5-card Major system of bidding, with the two main differences being the meaning and consequence of a 2-level, new-suit response by a Responder to Partner’s opening bid of one-of-a-suit, and with the use of a “**Forcing-1-NT**.”

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 simple response (not a jump-response) of two of any new suit, (Example: **1H** or **1S** by the Opener, then **2C**, or **2D** by the 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 only 1-round, but not to Game. There are, therefore, 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 “*unpassed*” 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, by some Partnerships, evidence a weak, pre-emptive, jump-response by Responder, would not represent a simple response, and, therefore, would not represent a “**2/1 Game-Forcing**” scenario. Naturally if such jump-responses were, by Partnership agreement, strong, showing 19 {+} HCP’s, it would not only be game-forcing, but Slam invitational, as well.

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

The main advantage with the “**2/1 Game-Forcing**” bidding system is that, because there is a lack of concern that the bidding will end shy of a Game-level contract, it therefore, allows, and actually facilitates, by conservation of bidding space, 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.

One disadvantage of the “**2/1 Game-Forcing**” bidding system, however, is that there is no easy way to show many hands with invitational strength or less. To facilitate the bidding process and to compensate for this disadvantage, when 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 then 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, the latter of which is, therefore, weaker.

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

1. Responder is a "*previously-passed*" Player and the Opener is therefore in the 3rd seat relative to the Dealer.

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 a **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 (HCP's). 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 the Opener's responding Partner held 10 or more HCP's.

3. In some Partnerships, when 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 as few as 12-13 HCP's, and opposite this potential misfit, if Opener were to hold 6-cards in his/her Major, also with minimum, high-card point, opening values; Game is unlikely, and Responder's repeat of his/her Minor suit removes the Game-forcing nature of the initial two-over-one bidding sequence, but, once again, this not automatic and must be discussed and understood by Partnership agreement.

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), is not a "**Forcing-1-NT**," and is, therefore, **not** forcing for 1-round.

5. In the "**2/1 Game-Forcing**" bidding system, "**Reverses**" by the Opening Bidder do not exist following a "**Two-Over-One**" bidding sequence by Opener and his/her responding Partner!