

# NON-FORCING AUCTION SEQUENCES

Recognition as to the non-forcing nature of any bidding sequence is vital in Partnership communication and understanding. Many bidding sequences exist which permit one or the other of the Partners to end the bidding, short of a game-level, final contract. Before "**Passing**" in such auction sequences, however, a Player must be satisfied that a game-level contract is unlikely. He/she should also be sure that there is not a safer, superior, part-score. The following are examples of many non-forcing, auction sequences.

**4S -- Dbl. -- P --?** Any "**Double**" of a pre-emptive bid at a level of **4S** or above, by Partnership understanding, is **not** a "**Take-Out Double**." It is for penalties and is, therefore, non-forcing.

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**1H -- P -- 1S -- P** The opening Heart Bidder has limited his/her hand to 13-15 HCP's, and has shown a holding  
**2H -- P -- 2S -- P** of six or more Hearts. The Spade Responder, knowing this, has opted to over-ride Opener's call.  
**?** The **2S** bid, by Responder is weak. It shows 6 or more Spades, 6-10 HCP's, and is, therefore, non-forcing.

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**1S -- Dbl. -- 2S -- ?** Responder to the "**Take-Out Double**" would normally have been forced to bid, even with as few as 0 HCP's, if the **2S** bidder had "**Passed**." In this situation, however, where subsequent to the "**Double**" there was an intervening bid, the Doubler's Partner is no longer under a mandatory obligation to bid. If he/she had bid, however, it would have been considered to be a "**Free-Bid**", showing at least 6 HCP's.

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**1H -- P -- 1NT -- P** A "**1-NT**" response to an opening bid of one-of-any-suit limits the Responder to 6-10 HCP's,  
**?** unless the Partnership is utilizing a "**Forcing-NT**" bidding system over an opening bid of one-of-a-Major. Absent the latter, since the Opener is under no obligation to make a re-bid, he/she may "**Pass**," if holding minimum values. The **1-NT** response, using standard bidding practice, is a limited, non-forcing call.

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**1C -- P -- 1H -- 1S** An Opener is normally obligated to make a re-bid if the Responder bids any new  
**?** suit evidencing 6-18 HCP's; i.e., anything other than a "**1-NT**" or a simple raise in Opener's suit, both of which would evidence a limited 6-10 HCP's. Here, however, since Opener's RHO has introduced an overcall, the Opener, if having only a minimum of 13-15 HCP's, may elect to "**Pass**," since Opener's responding Partner has an opportunity to re-bid should he/she choose to do so. If, however, the Opener does elect to re-bid, under these circumstances, he/she would show a "**Free-Bid**" which evidences a further clarification as to distribution, additional values, or both.

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**1NT -- P -- "4NT" --P** Over a **1-NT** opening, a "**4-NT**" response is a "**quantitative**" bid asking Partner to  
**?** "**Pass**" with a minimum count, else to bid "**6-NT**" if holding a maximum HCP count.

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**2H -- P -- 3H -- P** A raise of a pre-emptive bid is **not** invitational. It is, rather, furtherance of the pre-empt  
**?** ("**RONF**") ("**R**aise is the **O**nly **N**on-**F**orce"). It is the only non-forcing bid a Responder to a pre-emptive, opening bid can make. Any new suit or a bid of "**2-NT**," by the Responder, would have been forcing.

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**1C -- 1H -- 2C -- 2D** Any new suit bid by a Responder to an overcall is **not** forcing. It is merely a  
**P ---- ?** competitive bid showing a constructive alternative overcall. **The only forcing bid that Responder to an overcall can make is a cue-bid of the suit bid by the Opponents.**

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**1H -- P -- INT -- P** The Opener, here, has shown a second suit with 11-18 HCP's. A lower- ranking 2<sup>nd</sup> suit bid  
**2D -- P -- ?** by an Opening bidder, at the cheapest level, is **not** forcing and can be "**Passed**" in either the "**Standard American**" or the "**Forcing-NT**" systems of bidding.

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**1NT - P -- "2C" -- P** The **1-NT** opening Bidder, in response to the "**2C**" Stayman call has denied a 4-card  
**"2D" - P -- 2H -- P** Major by virtue of his/her "**2D**" response. Responder's re-bid of **2H** shows 4-4 in the  
**?** Major suits and a very weak HCP holding. Opener is asked to either "**accept**" the bid of **2H**, else "**correct**" to **2S**, whichever Major suit he/she prefers. This non-forcing sequence is called: "**Crawling Stayman**."

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**1NT - P -- "2D" - P** Responder has a 5-card Heart suit, by virtue of his Jacoby "2D" transfer, and invitational strength, by virtue of his/her **2-NT** re-bid. Opener can either "Pass", or bid **3-NT**, **3H**, or **4H**, depending upon his/her Heart holding and whether having minimum or maximum opening NT values. This is an example of the "Check-Back," part of "Jacoby Transfers."

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**1H -- P -- 2H -- P** A single level raise of Partner's opening suit guarantees both support and a limited, non-forcing, 6-10 HCP's. If the Opener had a minimum 13-15 HCP opening hand, game would not be probable, and Opener would be allowed to "Pass."

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**1H -- 1NT -- Dbl. - P** A "Double" over a direct **1-NT** overcall is for penalties and seeks a "Pass" from Opener. It is *never* a "Negative Double" and is, therefore, non-forcing.

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**1H -- P -- 2H -- P** Responder initially evidenced 6-10 HCP's. Opener's **3H** bid is invitational and is non-forcing. If Responder holds the top of his/her 6-10 initial raise, he/she can accept the invitation to game by bidding **4H**. Alternatively, some Partnerships play this **3H** bid as a "Bar-Bid" which is not invitational, but rather, pre-emptive by attempting to bar the Opponent's from entering the auction.

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**1D -- P -- 1S -- P** Opener has limited his/her hand to a 13-15 HCP minimum opening with either the **2D/2S** re-bid of his/her own suit at the 2-level, else supporting Responder's suit with a single raise. If Responder also holds minimum HCP values he/she is, therefore, is allowed to "Pass" either of Opener's non-forcing re-bids, as shown here.

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**1NT -- P -- 2NT -- P** Responder has invited Opener to bid **3-NT**, if Opener holds a maximum HCP count. If Opener has a minimum holding, he/she may "Pass" this non-forcing, invitation to game.

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**1NT -- P -- "2C" - P** Responder has invoked "Stayman" and has found a favorable response of Hearts. **2H -- P -- 3H -- P** The **3H** bid is now an invitation to the 4-level. If the Opener has the maximum of his/her original NT range then he/she bids **4H**. If, alternatively, he/she holds the minimum, he/she "Passes." This is a non-forcing, invitational, bidding sequence with Responder showing six or more Major suit pieces.

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**1D -- P -- 1S -- P** Responder, here, has shown invitational strength (11-12 HCP's), and either a 6-card **2D -- P -- 3D/3S -- P** Spade suit, or 3-card or better support for Opener's Diamond suit. Responder's bid is **not** forcing and Opener, without additional opening values, is permitted to "Pass."

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**1H -- P -- 4H --** The **4H** response is a pre-emptive bid usually made with at least a 5-card support for Partner's opening suit along with 5-7 HCP's. Opener must "Pass," as this bid is pre-emptive and is, therefore, non-forcing.

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**1C/1D -- P -- 1H/1S -- P** Opener has shown a balanced hand with 18-19 HCP's. This bid is non-forcing, since Responder, with very minimum values (5-6 HCP's), has the option to "Pass."

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**1H -- P -- 3NT -- P** Responder shows a lack of support for Opener's suit with either 13-15 or 16-18 HCP, by Partnership agreement. Unless Opener feels there is Slam in the hand, or chooses to correct to **4H** without counting upon any Heart support from Partner, Opener may "Pass."

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**1D -- P -- 1NT -- P** Opener has evidenced a 16-18 HCP's with a 6-card or longer Diamond holding. If **3D -- P --** Responder has the lower limit (6-7 HCP's) of his original 6-10 HCP **1-NT** response, game is unlikely, and so Responder, here, may "Pass."

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**P -- P -- 1H -- P** The **1S** bidder had previously "Passed" showing less than opening count. **1S - P --** The **1S** Responder has denied support for Hearts. If the original **1H** bidder has merely a minimum opening HCP count, game is not likely, and so he/she may simply "Pass."

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**1C/1D – P – 2NT – P** Responder, here, shows an invitational 11-12 HCP's and no 4-card Major.  
Opener, with minimum opening values, may simply "**Pass**," since Responder's bid is invitational and is, therefore, non-forcing.

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**1D -- P -- 3NT -- P** The "**4C**" bid immediately following the game-level **3-NT** bid is **Gerber**, asking  
**"4C" - P -- "4H" - P** for Aces. The "**4-NT**" re-bid by the Gerber-invoking Partner is a "**sign-off**"  
**4NT - P ---- ?** No-Trump escape, having determined that Slam was not feasible.

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**"2C" -- P -- "2D" -- P** Opener has shown 22-23 HCP's and an evenly-balanced hand. If Responder has 0-3  
**2NT -- P ----- ?** HCP's, game is not likely, and so Responder could "**Pass**" Opener's, non-forcing, 2-NT  
re-bid.

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**1NT -- P -- "2H" - P** In this bidding scenario, the Responder has game values and a 5-5 distribution in the  
**2S ----P --- 4H ---P** Majors, along with game-going values. Knowing the **1-NT** Opener to have at least three,  
**??** if not four, of one of the Majors, the **1-NT** bidder is given the choice of "**Passing**" **4H**, or  
"**correcting**" to **4S**, if he/she so chooses it to be the preferred, game-level, Major suit contract.

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**1NT -- P -- "2C" -- P** Responder has game values plus a 4-card and a 6-card or longer Major suit holding.  
**"2D" -- P - 4H/4S -- P** Having failed to find a 4-card Major suit in Opener's hand, Responder then bids four  
**?** of the longer Major suit knowing that the Opener has at least two pieces in that second Major suit.  
The Partner who opened **1-NT** must then "**Pass**" the **4H** or **4S** choice mandated by the Responder.

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**2H -- 2NT -- P -- ?** A **2-NT** overcall following an opening weak 2-bid by an Opponent is equivalent to a  
strong opening **1-NT**, showing 15-17 HCP's with a balanced hand and at least one stopper in  
the Opponent's bid suit. As is the case with an opening **1-NT**, it, too, is non-forcing.

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It is standard practice that, for the most part, a new suit bid by Responder to Opener's one-of-a-suit opening call is  
forcing. There are, however, four instances where a new suit, bid by Responder, is not forcing.

They are as follows:

- (1) **1C/1D – P – 1S – P** This sequence shows Responder to hold a weak hand (6-10 HCP's) and either a  
**1-NT – P – 2H – P** 5-5 or a 5-4 holding in the two Major suits, asking Opener to either "**Pass**" or  
**???** "**Correct**" to **2S** in order to play in a Major suit part-score. If the Responder had  
wished to force the bidding, he/she would have had to re-bid **3H**.
  - (2) **1C/1D – 1-NT – 2H/2S – P** Responder is showing a long suit, usually 6-cards or longer suit and a very weak  
**???** 3-7 HCP holding; i.e., a hand that is too weak to have "**Doubled**" his/her right-hand Opponent  
for penalties. It is a bid "**to play**." "**Doubling**" for penalty under these circumstances requires 8 or  
more HCP's.
  - (3) **1S – P – 1-NT – P** Responder, after showing a 6-10 HCP, **1-NT** first response, now bids a new suit.  
**2C – P -- 2D – P** This bidding sequence is an example of a "**New Suit Out of the Blue**" response. It  
**??** shows a very weak hand with a 6-card or longer suit of lower rank than that first bid by the  
Opener.
  - (4) **1S – Dble. – 2C/2D/2H – P** Responder, here, when bidding a new suit at the 2-level, following a "**Take-Out**  
**?? Double**" by Responder's right-hand Opponent, absent him/her responding with a "**Re-Double**" is  
showing a long suit of lower rank than Opener's bid suit in a hand with fewer than 10 HCP's; i.e.,  
absent the ability of bidding his/her new suit at the 1-level. With 10 or more HCP's, Responder would  
have "**Re-Doubled**," setting up the possibility of "**Doubling**" the Opponents creating a penalty scenario.
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