

Forcing Bids

A **forcing bid** is a bid that prohibits partner from passing at the next turn to call. When responding to partner's bid, it is always important to know whether or not the bid was forcing. When bidding yourself, you need to be clear if you are forcing partner to bid or not.

This is an example I sometimes see. Opener bids 1♦ and this is responder's hand.

♠ A Q 7 2 ♥ A 6 4 2 ♦ T 3 ♣ Q J 2	Responder, with values for game, bids 1♥. This is fine since the new suit is forcing. Opener rebids 1NT. With a liking for no trumps, responder raises to 2NT. Unfortunately, 2NT is not forcing. Opener passes and game is missed.
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Of course, responder's second bid should have been 3NT.

What makes a bid forcing?

Any bid that shows an unlimited number of HCP is forcing. In the example above, 1♥ is forcing because it shows any number of HCP from six upwards. It is unlimited. Again, in the example above, 2NT is limited. It shows ten to twelve HCP. Therefore, it is not forcing.

Any artificial bid is forcing. Clearly, you would not want partner to pass your Stayman 2♣, or your transfers or your strong 2♣ opening or the artificial 2♦ response.

What bids are not forcing?

Any bid that is limited and natural is not forcing. Some examples:

- Any opening bid of one of a suit. These bids are limited to 19 points since stronger hands would open 2♣.
- Any natural no trump bid.
- Any raise of partners suit.
- Any rebid of your own suit.

A curious example.

Suppose partner opens 1♦, you respond with 1♥ and partner rebids 1♠.

♠ J 6 2 ♥ K 6 4 2 ♦ J 3 ♣ J 5 3 2	Even though 1♠ is a new suit, it is not forcing. The bid is limited to nineteen or less points because partner did not open 2♣. With an absolutely rock-bottom hand like this, you can pass.
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This is an unusual situation. Nearly always, you would bid something.

When opponents intervene after a forcing bid

If your partner makes a forcing bid and the next player doubles or makes a bid, the pressure is off. You are no longer forced to bid something. After the intervention, your partner will get another chance to call.

Jump Rebids

When opener rebids the original suit at the lowest possible level, it is not forcing. Suppose this is your hand where you opened 1♥ and partner bid 1♠.

♠ K 2
♥ A K T 6 4 2
♦ A 3
♣ Q 3 2

With 16 or more HCP and a six card suit, make a jump bid. In this case, bid 3♥.

This is still not forcing but partner would need a really good reason to pass.

Suppose this was partner's hand.

♠ A Q 7 2
♥ 9 8
♦ 9 6 5 2
♣ J T 4

It is close to minimum with just seven HCP but 4♥ has every chance of making.

A variation of the jump occurs when opener has a strong, two-suited hand like this.

♠ A 2
♥ A K T 6 3
♦ K Q T 5 2
♣ 4

You open 1♥ and partner bids 1♠. Jump to 3♦ to show two five card suits and 16 or more HCP.

Once more, partner would need a very good reason to pass.

Suppose this was partner's hand.

♠ K Q 7 2
♥ 9 8
♦ J 6 5 2
♣ J T 5

Once again, a weak hand but 5♦ looks like a very good contract.

Game Forcing Bids

Most of the time, a forcing bid only prohibits partner from passing at the **next** turn to call. However, there are some situations where the prohibition exists until game is reached. One example of this is a positive response to a strong 2♣ opening. Let's say you open 2♣. Partner bids 2♥ and with your agreements, this shows seven or more HCP. This means the partnership has enough points for game. Therefore, neither player should pass until game has been reached.

Principle of Fast Arrival

Once you are in a game forcing situation, a jump to game shows a minimum hand. A more round-about way shows a stronger hand. An example:

Partner opens 2♣ and you bid 2♥ which is game forcing. Partner now bids 4♥. This is **fast arrival** and shows minimum values for the 2♣ opening. A bid of 3♥ shows a stronger hand with heart support and interest in slam. **S**low arrival = **S**trong

Deal 1

	North	
	♠ K J 8 ♥ A T 9 5 ♦ K 2 ♣ K T 7 4	
West		East
♠ 9 6 5 ♥ J 8 3 ♦ A 7 6 3 ♣ A Q 3		♠ A 7 4 ♥ K 4 2 ♦ Q 8 4 ♣ J 9 8 5
	South	
	♠ Q T 3 2 ♥ Q 7 6 ♦ J T 9 5 ♣ 6 2	

West	North	East	South
	1♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	1♦ ⁽²⁾
Pass	1♥ ⁽³⁾	Pass	Pass ⁽⁴⁾
Pass			

1. Two or more clubs
2. Only 5 HCP. Not really enough to bid. But surely, anything has to be better than 1♣.
3. Prefer bidding the major to 1NT.
4. Despite partners new suit, pass is the best option. A 4-3 fit should not be too bad.

With trumps breaking kindly, it should be possible to scramble to eight tricks in hearts.

If east-west decide to compete, they will not be able to find a contract that makes.

Deal 2

	North	
	♠ J 8 ♥ A 7 ♦ J 5 3 ♣ K Q J 7 5 2	
West		East
♠ K Q 9 6 4 ♥ J 6 5 3 ♦ K Q 7 ♣ 6		♠ A 2 ♥ K Q T 9 ♦ A T 9 4 ♣ T 8 3
	South	
	♠ T 7 5 3 ♥ 8 4 2 ♦ 8 6 2 ♣ A 9 4	

West	North	East	South
		1♦	Pass
1♠ ⁽¹⁾	2♣ ⁽²⁾	Pass ⁽³⁾	Pass
2♥ ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	3♥ ⁽⁵⁾	Pass
4♥ ⁽⁶⁾	Pass	Pass	Pass

1. Longest suit first.
2. Showing 10+ points and a good suit.
3. 2♥ would promise 5 diamonds, 4 hearts and 16+ HCP (reverse). Double would promise three spades (support double).
4. Showing five spades, four hearts and 10+ HCP.
5. Support partners suit.
6. With 11 HCP and two shortage points, go to game.

Some Wests would prefer to double rather than bid 2♥. Again, this would show five spades and four hearts and again, east-west would quickly get to game.

A comfortable contract. Lose just one heart and one club.

Deal 3

	North	
	♠ K 9 6 5 ♥ 9 2 ♦ 8 6 ♣ A 8 5 4 3	
West		East
♠ T 8 ♥ K 5 4 ♦ T 9 7 2 ♣ K Q 9 2		♠ Q J 7 3 ♥ 8 7 ♦ A J 4 3 ♣ J T 7
	South	
	♠ A 4 2 ♥ A Q J T 6 3 ♦ K Q 5 ♣ 6	

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	1♠ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♥ ⁽²⁾
Pass	4♥ ⁽³⁾	All Pass	

1. Not strong enough to bid clubs at the two level.
2. 16+ HCP. 6+ hearts.
3. Seven HCP and one shortage point. Partner has 16 HCP and must have a couple of shortage points. That is 26 in total, enough for game.

Another straightforward contract. The heart finesse loses and there is a spade loser and a diamond loser. But that is all. Ten tricks.

Deal 4

	North	
	♠ J ♥ K 9 5 3 ♦ J T 7 ♣ Q 9 8 5 2	
West		East
♠ A K Q 6 2 ♥ A 2 ♦ K 9 6 4 ♣ A 3		♠ 9 8 5 3 ♥ Q J T 8 4 ♦ A 5 2 ♣ 4
	South	
	♠ T 7 4 ♥ 7 6 ♦ Q 8 3 ♣ K J T 7 6	

West	North	East	South
2♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♥ ⁽²⁾	Pass
2♠ ⁽³⁾	Pass	3♠ ⁽⁴⁾	Pass
4NT ⁽⁵⁾	Pass	5♦	Pass
5NT	Pass	6♣	Pass
6♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

1. 19+ HCP, four or less losers
2. 7+ HCP, 5+ hearts, game forcing
3. 5+ spades
4. 4♠ would be minimum. There are 12 points (7 HCP, 3 for singleton, 2 for extra trump) in support of spades.
5. Use Blackwood to find partner with one ace and no kings.

If a diamond is led, win it in hand. Draw trumps. Cash the ace of clubs and ruff a club. Take the heart finesse, losing to the king. Win the return, enter dummy with the ace of diamonds and play off the hearts. Discard losing diamonds on the hearts.

An excellent slam with just 27 HCP.