

Lesson 5 – Part 2 – Forcing/Non-Forcing Bids, Bidding to Game Level

As you continue with your bidding and learning, you should be trying to bid more accurately. When you and your partner have game level points together (25 points for 4♥, 4♠ or 3NT or 29 points for 5♦ or 5♣) and the appropriate fit in a suit or stoppers for NT, then you should be reaching game level in your bidding. In order to do that, you need some skills.

You should be:

- 1) Bidding to show your point count.
- 2) Understanding your partner's bids so you can assess his/her point count.
- 3) Recognizing which bids are forcing and which are not. That goes both ways. When you bid a non-forcing bid, you can expect your partner could pass. When your partner bids a forcing bid, then you must bid again.
- 4) Making sure you take the bidding to game when you know that, together, you have enough points and the appropriate fit to bid that high. "The one who knows, goes!"

Opener categorizes his/her Hand: Responder categorizes his/her hand:

Opener 1 of a suit		Responder	
Minimum	12-15 pts	Minimum	6-9 pts
Medium	16-18 pts	Medium	10-12 pts
Maximum	19-21 pts	Maximum	13+ pts

Be aware that the categories are different for a 1NT opening bid. Bidding to game when partner opens 1NT was covered in Lesson 2. (This lesson concentrates on trump suit contracts.)

Opener 1NT		Responder	
Minimum	15 pts	Minimum	0-7 pts
Medium	16 pts	Medium	8-9 pts
Maximum	17 pts	Maximum	10+ pts

If the opening bid is 2NT or 2♣, then you would assess your responding hand differently, also.

Some examples of game level points (using 1 level of a suit as the opening bid):

- 1) You open the bidding at the 1 level having 19-21 pts. Your partner responds showing 6+ pts. You know you should be in game level in a major or NT, if you can find the fit or have stoppers in all suits.
- 2) Your partner opens the bidding and you have 13+ points.
- 3) You open the bidding with a medium hand (16-18 pts) and partner responds at the 2 level in a different suit. (Partner is showing 10+ pts, so together you have game level.)

What you need to remember when bidding:

First Round: Bid your suit with 12-21 pts.

Second Round: Must show your points now! Jump to show a medium or max hand. A change of suit in the first round is forcing! When opening with a minimum hand (12-15 pts), your next bid is: (1) pass if partner supported the suit or partner gave a non-forcing bid, (2) bid 1NT if you can still do so or (3) bid partner's suit at lowest level if you can support their suit. With min pts to open, you can bid another suit at the lowest possible level which is not forcing. You can repeat your opening suit with 6+ cards in a major or 5+ cards in a

minor (still showing a min hand). A change of suit (without a jump) in the 2nd round by opener is not forcing. E.g. opener bid 1♦, responder bids 1♥ (forcing), opener bids 2♣ (not forcing and showing a minimum hand).

Supporting a major suit (when partner opens 1♥ or 1♠):

As soon as you know you will be supporting your partner's major suit, stop and think!

You will now agree with their suit and you will show your range of points with your next bid.

As Responder, bid 2♥ or 2♠ to show 3+ card support and 6-9 points.

As Responder, bid 3♥ or 3♠ to show 4+ card support and 10-12 points.

As Responder, bid 2 of any other suit (forcing), with 3-card support and 10+ pts*.

Next bid 3♥ or 3♠ to show 3-card support and 10-12 pts OR

Next bid 4♥ or 4♠ to show 3-card support and 13+ pts.

*If opponents intervene with a bid, you may prefer to jump to the level needed to show points.

Before you agree with partner's major suit, count dummy points in side suits (suits other than trump):

1 point for a doubleton, 2-3 pts for a singleton, 4-5 pts for a void.

Also, consider adding 1 pt for the 9th trump (e.g., if you have 4 to support).

Examples of Forcing Bids:

- A change of suit in first round. (E.g., a change of suit by Responder.)
- Bidding the 4th suit (without any bidding by opponents) is forcing, usually to game (sometimes looking for a NT contract showing no stoppers in the 4th suit).
- A jump-shift (jumping a level and changing the suit). (E.g., opener bids 1♥, responder bids 1♠, opener rebids 3♦.)

Note: An intervening bid by opponent negates a forcing bid; you can then choose whether to bid or not.

Examples of Non-Forcing Bids:

- A change of suit by Opener without a jump in level.
- A rebid of your own suit (shows point count) or partner rebids his own suit.
- Support for partner's suit (shows point count).
- A first response of 1NT (showing 6-9 pts) or opener's 2nd bid is 1NT.
- Game level bids (or slam level bids).

Very Useful Re-Bid, when Opener has 18-19 HCP and a balanced hand:

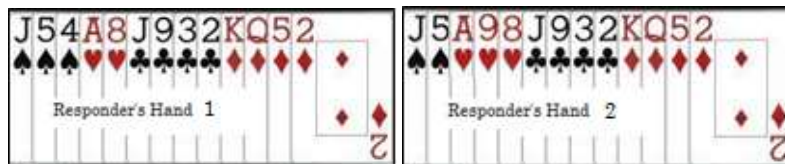
Opener bids 1 of a suit (e.g. 1♣), Responder bids another suit at the 1 level and opener does not have a fit with that suit. Opener should rebid 2NT, as in the example to the right. Opener is showing a balanced hand, no fit in a major, and 18-19 HCP (too high to open 1NT).



Very Useful Response Bid to Opener's Bid of 1 of a suit, when Responder has 10-12 HCP, balanced hand, no 4-card major:

- #1 – Respond 2NT unless opener bid 1♠.
- #2 – Respond 2NT unless opener bid 1♥.

This first response bid of 2NT is very descriptive to opener. It is not forcing.



If Responder has 3-card support for Opener's major, then he should support the major!

#1 has 3-card support for spades; #2 has 3-card support for hearts.