

## SIMPLIFIED TWO OVER ONE GAME FORCE

**WHY IS "TWO OVER ONE" GAME FORCING?** Both opener and responder know at the first response that there's a game or better in the hand; there need not be any "I wonder if we're going to game?" Subsequent bidding locates the best game or slam without wasting bidding space by jumping, etc. It's simple, straightforward and as unambiguous as possible.

The Problem with "Standard". In "Standard American", a 2-level suit response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opener shows 10+ points and usually a 5+ card suit:

[1♥ - P - 2♣ ...] Often, players "fudge" a little with minimum hands or bid weak suits. Equally often, 2♣ or 2♦ responders have more than 10 HCP, perhaps even an opener or better. But the opener doesn't know that, so she must rebid cautiously so as to accommodate any possibility.

Standard bidders constantly struggle with "Is partner's bid forcing?" This ambiguity is what complicates "Standard" and is the reason so many players now play Two Over One Game Force. It's only a Queen stronger than a "Standard" 10-point 2-level bid, so it's a minor adjustment for "Standard" players to learn, but it's much better.

**WHAT ARE TWO OVER ONE GAME FORCE BIDS?** They are 2-level direct suit bids by a non-passed hand in response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opening, and they are forcing to game.

Examples of 2-level responses:

- |                       |                            |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. [1♠ - P - 2♦ ...]  | 4. [1♦ - P - 2♣ ...]       |
| 2. [1♥ - 2♣ - 2♦ ...] | 5. [1♥ - P - 2♠ ...]       |
| 3. [1♠ - P - 2♥ ...]  | 6. [P - P - 1♠ - P 2♣ ...] |

SIMPLIFIED TWO OVER ONE GAME FORCE eliminates some 2 over 1 sequences:

- Jump Shift responses are all weak in modern duplicate bidding, eliminating #5.
- Two Over One Game Force is OFF in competition, eliminating #2.
- Passed hands can't ever make game-forcing bids, so #6 is eliminated.
- Experience shows that Two Over One auctions that bid both minor suits are better played as Standard one-round, forcing responses, not game-forcing ones, thereby eliminating #4. Simplification.

It includes just these 5 responses to a major opener, playing 2 Over 1 Game Force:

[1♠ - P - 2♣ ...] [1♠ - P - 2♦ ...] [1♠ - P - 2♥ ...] [1♥ - P - 2♣ ...] [1♥ - P - 2♦ ...]

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**GAME-FORCING 2-LEVEL SUITS.** A game-forcing 2♣, 2♦ or 2♥ response promises not only the HCP and/or shape to force game, but shows a good 5+ card suit, not just any collection of 5+ cards. It should include the Ace or King; 4+ HCP and decent intermediates. It should be a suit that might be set up to run at NoTrump, or might provide side-suit discards if another suit becomes trump, or might become the trump with good 3+ card support by opener. It is not just any collection of 4+ cards to start a Two Over One game force auction: for example, it's not ♣QT64 or ♦JT762.

Two Over One Game Force is "Off" over an intervening bid [1♠ - 2♣ - 2♦ ]

In this auction, the 2♦ response is "Standard", showing a decent Diamond suit and 10+ HCP, but is forcing for only 1 round. It may also have a deferred Spade raise coming on the forced next round.

### THE "OTHER" CONVENTION: 1NT FORCING

There's an alternative to starting a game force with a shabby 2-level suit response, as some so-called 2 Over 1 bidders do. Often responder has a flat but strong hand without any side suit of note. What can she bid that forces the auction to continue?

The answer is "1NT Forcing", and it is the 2<sup>nd</sup> required convention in the Two Over One System. Actually, it's the only additional required convention in the System. At the table, 1NT Forcing comes up far more often than Two Over One game force responses, which are infrequent. 1NT Forcing is very flexible, as we'll see below.

*Note:* A [1♠ - P - 1♦ ...] auction may sound weak, but the 1♦ response could be of any HCP strength and it's forcing. The 1♠ opening, except in "Big Club" systems, although not forcing, could be 1 HCP shy of a 2♣ opener. Both are "unlimited" bids. It's a critical distinction, and unlimited responses are always forcing. E.g. 1NT Forcing is Forcing for one round unless there's interference or the hand has already passed.

### OPTIONAL GAME FORCING CONVENTIONS.

Examples of other game forcing, but not required Two Over One conventions, are Jacoby 2NT and Splinter responses. Most Two Over One partnerships include one or both of these two optional conventions, but neither of them or any other convention is required. They are described elsewhere as Responses to Major Suit Openings.

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CONTINUATIONS AFTER A TWO OVER ONE RESPONSE. Responder may make a “deferred raise” of opener’s major after first responding in a good side-suit. Responder is not required to raise immediately in a Two Over One auction. If he does, it’s no longer a forcing auction of any kind.

However, opener doesn’t know about possible deferred trump support when making her rebid, so unless she can rebid her opener, showing 6 pieces, or jump in another suit, she should assume the hand is heading toward a 3NT game and bid stoppers up-the-line. [1♥ - P - 2♣ - P 2♠ ...]

2♣ is game forcing response, but where is the game? Opener’s 2♠ shows a Spade stopper but denies a Diamond stopper because of not bidding 2♦. Also, opener’s 2♠ is not a Reverse, as you’re already in a game-forcing auction with the 2♣ response: it’s a stopper for a possible 3NT game but denies a Diamond stopper.

With both Spade and Diamond stoppers, the opener should rebid 2NT, not 3NT: leave room for responder in a game-forcing auction. She won’t pass it out. Responder may then show deferred trump support or bid or raise NT. [1♥ - P - 2♣ - P 2♠ - P - 3♥...] (a strong Heart raise) or 4♥ (a minimum Heart raise).

Notice that 3♥ is the stronger Heart raise because it leaves room for 4-level slam invitational cue bids below 4♥. if opener is interested she cue bids; if not, she bids 4♥. Responder always knew about going to a 4♥ game, but 3♥ now informs opener of slam possibility and leaves room for Ace-showing bids by either or both. Subtle & smart without the need for 4NT RKCB or any other Ace asking convention.

### Example Two Over One Game Forcing Sequences

<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder</i>	<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder</i>	<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder</i>
♠AKJ98	♠Q543	♠AQJ987	♠K32	♠AKJ98	♠42
♥A	♥54	♥Q7	♥AKJ98	♥KT5	♥QJ
♦KJ987	♦QT	♦KT2	♦654	♦T5	♦AKJ98
♣Q5	♣AKJ98	♣A6	♣Q5	♣KJ8	♣AT97
1♠	2♣ (GF)	1♠	2♥ (GF)	1♠	2♦ (GF)
3♦ Strong	3♠ (Strong)	3♠	4♠	2NT	3NT
4NT <i>RKCB</i>	5♣ (1 Ace)	Pass			
6♠	Pass				

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### WHY IS 1NT FORCING SUCH A MAJOR PART OF THE SYSTEM?

A 1NT Forcing response to a major suit opening is not a game-forcing response; it is just a 1-round force that can be of any strength or shape: [1♠ – P – 1NT# - ...].

*(# means it must immediately be announced out loud by the partner as “Forcing”).*

“1NT Forcing”, means unlimited HCP and that partner must continue bidding for one round, lacking interference. [1♠ – P – 1NT# - 2♣ ...]. The Force is Off after 2♣.

A responder’s hand may be barely strong enough to respond or raise or could be strong enough to force game when responding to any average opener, or it could be in the Slam invitational range, or anything in between.

In Simplified Two Over One style, a responder without a good 5-card suit for a game force, or some other game-forcing response, or some random HCP without a major suit raise, asks himself “What should I bid?” Here’s the very important reason for why 1NT Forcing is a major part of the Two Over One style. He doesn’t have to make a commitment on his first response because he can “temporize” by bidding 1NT Forcing with any HCP strength or shape. It comes up far more often than a legitimate 2 over 1 bid as described above.

Think of 1NT Forcing as a “temporary or waiting” response, forcing the opener to further describe her hand – it’s simple, unambiguous and very comforting to know you have such a bid available.

After a 1NT Forcing response, opener must not assume anything about responder’s hand, because it could be of any strength and / or shape. Opener must describe anything relevant about the opening hand: a weak or jump rebid of an opening major; a Jump Shift in another suit or bid of 2NT, both showing about 17+ HCP. [1♠ – P – 1NT# - P 2NT ...].

Opener informs the 1NT Forcing responder about anything extra that could be of interest to responder’s hand. Often, opener’s rebid is 2♣ or 2♦, showing nothing exceptional – an average, 12+ HCP opening hand with a 5-card major suit and maybe even just a 3-card minor. Blah! But . . .

That’s exactly what the 1NT responder wants to know. The 1NT Forcing response said: “Partner, do you have anything extra in HCP or shape to help me figure out where we should go?” The answer frequently is “Nope”.

If there are extra HCPs or shape, responder’s hand may change relevance as a dummy. For example, if opener shows a 6-card major instead of the assumed opening 5-card major, then maybe responder with 2 trumps and opening HCP can raise it to game - an 8-card major suit fit and game-going HCP? Bid game!

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Or maybe he can pass openers 2♥ or 2♠ rebid with 6 HCP and 2 trumps, deciding that an 8-card major suit fit will be a safe place to play at the 2-level. Or responder with 2+ trumps and 15+ HCP could bid 4NT RKCB if opener makes a Jump Rebid of her major, showing 17+ and 6+ cards in her suit.

And anything in between is a possibility. But on his first rebid, responder knows what the picture probably is in the combined hands. Sound good? You bet it is – simplified and as unambiguous as possible in any system.

There are hundreds of other possibilities, covering the entire range of hands opening 1♥ or 1♠ and what the rebids could be after a “Forcing 1NT” response. But you can see the power of 1NT Forcing when there’s no simple response like [1♠ - P - 2♠ ...].

Responder has forced opener to bid again to show anything of interest, but he hasn’t committed to continue bidding. What if the 1NT responder has 1 of opener’s major Spade suit but 4 cards in her rebid of 2♥? Hasn’t this 1NT responder found a better place to play – an 8-card major suit fit at the 2 level, holding maybe only a handful of HCP? Certainly.

Further, if opponents balance with 3♦ over opener’s 2♥ rebid, can this responder, especially if not vulnerable and with a singleton Spade, can raise to 3♥ without a second’s thought? Sure, because “Shape rules at Duplicate”.

In the Two Over One Game Force style, with 1NT Forcing as a “temporizing” response, the whole spectrum becomes much clearer to responder, who had no obvious response like [1♠ - P - 2♠ ...], which she would have bid initially. BUT: 1NT Forcing is OFF over interference. 1NT becomes “natural”, i.e., a stopper. [1♥ - 1♠ - 2♠ - 1NT ...],

### OPENER’S REBIDS AFTER A 1NT FORCING RESPONSE.

Opener further describes her shape and strength, in a natural way:

- Rebids her 6-card suit. *Rebidding a 5-card suit is really bad. Don’t do it.*
- Bid another 4+ card suit, jumping if 17+ HCP [1♥ - P - 1NT# - P 3♣ ...]
- Bid 2NT with 17+ HCP or 3NT with 19+ HCP. [1♥ - P - 1NT# - P 2NT ...]

Opener often has no better rebid than to bid her longest minor, which might be just 3 cards long: A hand with 5 – 3 – 2 – 3 shape, for example. [1♠ - P - 1NT# - P 2♣ ...]. With 3 or 4 of both minors, bid Clubs – not Diamonds - regardless of HCP, to allow responder more choices. Don’t bid “the stronger” one.

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The following hands open 1♥ or 1♠ and partner responds 1NT. What is opener's rebid?

Opener	Responder
♠AKJ98	♠43
♥Q	♥AKJ9
♦KJ987	♦QT53
♣K5	♣J76
<i>Bid 3♦</i>	Bid 1NT

Opener	Responder
♠QJ9873	♠K32
♥AQ	♥AKT9
♦KT5	♦J98
♣76	♣K5
<i>Rebid 2♠</i>	Bid 1NT

Opener	Responder
♠AKJ98	♠42
♥KT5	♥AQJ9
♦KJ5	♦QJ3
♣KJ	♣QT987
<i>Bid 3NT</i>	Bid 1NT

1NT RESPONDER'S REBIDS: Opener has bid twice, showing her shape and any extras.

With a major suit fit, responder should bid the major as his rebid (2<sup>nd</sup> bid), so both know what the trump suit is. [1♥ - P - 1NT# - P 2♣ - P - 3♥ ...]

This 3♥ is a "Bad Limit Raise" showing 9 to 11 dummy points but only 3 Hearts.

With 4 Heart cards, responder would have bid 3♥ on his first response, not 1NT, thus showing opener a "Good" Limit Raise with 9 to 11 dummy points and 4 Hearts.

[1♥ - P - 3♥ ...] 4 card Heart support and limit raise strength.

With 5 to 7 HCP and 2 Hearts, responder can rebid 2♥. That is not a raise after a 1NT Forcing response: it's a "preference" bid, saying "I don't see anything better than your suit, partner, but I only have 2 trumps for you". With 3 Hearts and 5+ HCP, responder would have raised to 2♥ on his 1<sup>st</sup> response; he would not have bid 1NT Forcing.

If unable to raise opener, responder can pass or bid 2NT or 3NT with stoppers:

[1♥ - P - 1NT# - P 2♣ - P - 2NT ...] Showing Spade and Diamond stoppers and inviting 3NT. A direct 3NT shows a game-going hand and opener may bid on or pass.

[1♥ - P - 1NT# - P 2♣ - P - 3NT ...]

1NT Forcing is Off or On by a passed hand: a Partnership Agreement.

[P - 1♥ - 1♠ - 1NT - P ??? ...] Forcing or not? you decide and mark your card.

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**CAUTION:** If responder bids a new suit after opener's rebid, that is a "Drop Dead" bid. PASS !

[1♥ - P - 1NT# - P 2♣ - P - 2♦ ...] 2♦ says "Partner, I have a Diamond bust.

This shows a long Diamond suit, but a hand not strong enough to bid Two Over One by bidding 2♦. Opener should virtually always pass such a bid as it's a preempt. That's also why opener should rebid 2♣, not 2♦, if both are short: Responder may want to pass 2♣ rather than being forced to bid 3♣ to show the Club bust.

**A FINAL ALTERNATIVE.** Occasionally, there will be a game-forcing hand that doesn't fit any of the patterns above: a 14 HCP 1-4-4-4 responder with 1 Spade. With this hand, responder will bid 1NT *because it is forcing* unless opener rebids Hearts. Lacking some dramatic rebid by opener, responder can then rebid 3NT, which is to play: not conventional.

Such hands could also be suitable for a 4♥ or 4♠ rebid without sounding preemptive:

A. [1♥ - P - 1NT# - P 2♣ - P - 4♥ ...] holding (♠KQx ♥Kxxx ♦QJxx ♣Kx).

This is a lot stronger 4♥ responder bidding sequence than a direct 4♥ response, which, by definition, is preemptive with 0 to 8 HCP and 5+ Hearts. In this auction it might be better to bid 1NT Forcing and then jump to the Heart game, perhaps by Partnership Agreement denying any Aces. Opener could pass 4♥ or go on to Blackwood, knowing responder has no Aces but a game-forcing Heart hand.

The Final Alternative is then a 1NT response that simply has no place to go without ambiguity: so 1NT Forcing is the answer, even with game-going strength. (It's unlimited, remember?) Temporize, knowing opener isn't going to pass you out, to see if there's something special in her hand. In the above A. hand, what if opener rebids 3♦ - a Jump Shift showing strong Diamonds and 17+ HCP, facing your ♦QJxx? Now you're going to get to a slam-going sequence in Hearts, right? Of course you are, with a strong double-fit in the red suits and plenty of HCP.

First, rebid 3♥ over 3♦ to set the trump suit, then bid 4NT RKC Blackwood if she doesn't do it first.

Opener's 2♣ response in the examples diagrammed above showed nothing extra, so responder just bids game, confident that it is the right contract, regardless of the outcome. This pair should be in a 4♥ game as that's where "the field" will be today, right? Be there!

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THE ONE EXCEPTION IN TWO OVER ONE GAME FORCE. After one of the five 2 Over 1 Game Force initial responses, a game or a penalty double contract of an opponent's bid must be reached, with one (optional) exception, AKA a "Partnership Agreement" during a 2 Over 1 auction. *A recommended Partnership Agreement*

If opener immediately rebids his major, it shows a weak, shapely hand with as few as 10 or 11 HCP but with a 6+ card suit. The responder may then pass, abandoning the Game Force, or may bid on, knowing opener's shape and minimum HCP strength. [1♠ – P – 2♦ – P 2♠ ...]

This is a "Standard" ACBL convention with a check box in the GENERAL APPROACH Section of the ACBL convention card. Here's why it's great in the simplified 2 Over 1 style:

IMPROVED WEAK TWOS. This exception distinguishes between a 10 or 11 HCP 2♥ or 2♠ weak openers and a 6 HCP 2♥ or 2♠ weak openers.

Openings of 2♥ or 2♠ are very weak and responder knows it immediately. If you open 2♠, it means you don't have 10+ HCP; you are really weak, but with 6 trumps. There's no need for partner to ask you for outside entries, because there aren't any. Otherwise, with a 6-card suit and 10+ HCP, opener will open 1♥ or 1♠ and then immediately rebid it after any 2 over 1 response, as it says on the ACBL Convention card.

*Notes: Major suit openings in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> seat may be entirely different if your partnership plays a major suit opening convention called Drury.*

*We'll see elsewhere that they might have only 8 HCP!*