

FORCING VERSUS NON FORCING BIDS by Maritha Pottenger

The first rule of whether a bid is forcing or NOT forcing is **ASBAF**. That stands for: **All Strange Bids Are Forcing**. If you are not sure what your partner's bid means, it is probably advisable to make another call!

The only opening bid that is 100% forcing is 2C (unless you play a Big Club or some system other than Standard American or Two over One).

New Suits bid by Responder are 100% forcing—with ONE exception which occurs ONLY if you play New Minor Forcing. (The exception is 1 of a minor-pass-1S-P-1NT-P-2H is NON forcing, showing a weak 5-4. It is strictly: “Pass 2H or correct back to 2S with 3-card support or with 2 spades and only 3 hearts.”)

New Suit by Opener is Forcing at the 2 level and above if the second suit is HIGHER than the first suit. That is a Reverse and promises at least 5-4 in the suits with 17 or more HCP. New Suit at the one level is just bidding up the line. NO REVERSES at the one level.

New Suit by Opener that is LOWER than first suit is NON FORCING (pass or correct).

Jump Rebids in the same suit are NOT forcing—neither by Opener (where they show 16-18 HCP and a good 6-card suit) NOR by Responder (where they show 9-11 HCP and a good 6-card suit). Can be passed.

Strong Jump Shifts in Suits are 100% forcing—but be sure you know when partner is making a strong jump shift as opposed to a Weak Jump Shift, a splinter bid, or something else!

Jump Shifts in NT and all NT rebids (including after 2C opening) are NOT forcing. That hand is limited. Partner is Captain.

Any bid that asks a question or gives a command is FORCING. Any artificial bid is 100% forcing: Stayman; Jacoby Transfers; Texas Transfers; 4-Suit Transfers; Michaels Cue Bids; Unusual 2NT, any Cue Bid of opponent's suit; any Ace Asking bids.

A new suit when partner opens a Weak Two OR a 3-level preempt is 100% forcing. If you have a different agreement, the new suit MUST be alerted and explained as nonforcing.

The ONLY forcing bid Advancer can make when the opponents open and partner makes a take-out double is to CUE BID the opponent's suit. That creates a Game Forcing auction (although some play it asks partner to pick a major if both majors are unbid). The game force is only to 3NT or 4 of a major—not to 5 of a minor.

1. Certain auctions require discussion and partnership agreement. For example, 1C-P-1H-P-2NT-P-4C. Do you feel that the 4C bid shows clubs and an invitational hand for 5 clubs with distribution unsuited for NT? Do you feel that 4C is Minorwood, agreeing to clubs and asking for Key Cards with Clubs as trumps? Do you feel that 4C is Gerber and asks for number of Aces held by Opener? **Partnership Agreement!**
2. If you play New Minor Forcing, then 1C-P-1S-P-1NT-P-2H is NON FORCING because you would use the new minor (2D) to inquire about Opener's major suit holdings and HCP (minimum or maximum). However, what about 1C-P-1S-P-2C-P-2H? Is that forcing—most people say yes, absolutely because it is a new suit by Responder. Fewer other people say, positively not because this is also a New Minor Forcing situation and Responder could bid 2D as a forcing bid to inquire about major holdings. **Partnership Agreement!**