

## NEW MINOR FORCING by Maritha Pottenger

Please bear in mind that *there are many variations of the New Minor Forcing Convention*. What I am teaching you is the very simplest form. Other partners may want to play more complicated version. If you play with someone outside this class, it would be good to discuss what each of you means by “New Minor Forcing.”

The reason for the development of New Minor Forcing is that many hands a Responder holds (when your partner opens the bidding) with invitational or game-forcing values are difficult to describe. Responders would often have trouble making natural bids that kept the bidding open and allowed the partnership to explore for the best game. The most typical responsive hand was one of 11-12 HCP with a 5-card major. Your partner opens a minor. You bid your major and your partner rebids one no trump. At this point, you do not know whether you want to be in no trump or in the major, and you want to invite (but not force) to game.

So, the New Minor Forcing bid was invented. If responder bids the New Minor (the minor that Opener did NOT open), that bid is forcing. Generally, Responder guarantees 5 cards in his/her major and is trying to decide whether the partnership should be playing in the major or in no trump—and at what level.

SO: 1D-P-1H-P-1NT-P-2C Two clubs is artificial. It is New Minor Forcing and cannot be passed. Responder can bid it with ZERO clubs in the hand. Responder will (most of the time) have 5 hearts. Opener’s first duty is to show 3-card support for the major if s/he has it. (Four card support is impossible from the bidding.) If Opener has a maximum hand for his/her previous bidding (e.g., 14 HCP), s/he can jump in the major. (Again, there are other variations.) Without 3-card support and a minimum hand, Opener can rebid 2NT (should promise stoppers or semi-stoppers in clubs and spades). If the original minor was diamonds, and the New Minor is clubs, Opener also has the option of rebidding the 5-card minor if s/he does NOT have 3-card major support.

If Responder bids spades first and then uses New Minor Forcing, Opener can show a 4-card heart suit (and it is no longer a reverse). If Opener has BOTH 4 hearts and 3 spades, it is best to show the 4 hearts first (4-4 fits may make a trick more than 5-3 fits). If Responder then bids no trump, you can correct to the spade contract.

**Remember, Responder must have a great 10 or more HCP to use New Minor Forcing!!** If you have less than that, just pass 1NT. (If you have singleton or void, may rebid 5-card major under duress. Partner will assume you have six cards. Rebidding major is a “drop dead” bid—stopping at 2 of level.) **New Minor Forcing can also be used when Opener rebids 2NT. Now Responder needs only 8 plus HCP.**

If Responder has only Invitational values, Responder’s third bid will show that. An example: 1C P 1H P 1NT P 2D P 2H P 3H is invitational values (and the promised 5 hearts). Also: 1D-P-1H-P-1NT-P-2C-P-2D (denying 3 hearts, showing 5 diamonds) –P-2NT shows invitational values for Responder. Opener can pass or bid 3NT.

**Most people play that New Minor Forcing applies when Opener rebids clubs as well as when Opener rebids NT.** So, 1C-P-1S-P-2C-P-2D is New Minor Forcing. Tell partner whether or not you have 3 spades and how good your hand is. If Responder bids hearts and Opener shows 4 spades, the minor is still New Minor Forcing (although it is also Fourth Suit Forcing on that auction). For example, 1D-P-1H-P-1S-P-2C is New Minor/Fourth Suit Forcing. With 3 hearts and minimum hand, bid 2H. With 3 hearts and maximum hand, bid 3H. With fewer than 3 hearts and 5 diamonds, rebid your diamonds. With fewer than 3 hearts and a stopper in the club suit, rebid 2NT.

**When responder is 5-4 (in spades and hearts)** with invitational values, use New Minor Forcing. Thus: 1C-P-1S-P-1NT-P-2D is NMF and Opener will show 4 hearts (FIRST!) or 3 spades if s/he has them. 1C-P-1S-P-1NT-P-2H shows a WEAK 5-4 (or possibly 5-5) hand and Opener should pass or correct to 2S. Remember, if Responder rebids major, it shows six cards. If responder jump-rebids major, shows 6 cards and invitational values, e.g., 1C-P-1H-P-1NT-P-3H shows 6 hearts and 9-11 HCP.