

# play bridge

*A section designed with the newer player in mind.*

Last week, a student came up to me and asked about forcing bids. “I know this sounds basic, but when is a bid by responder forcing or not forcing?” he asked.

If there is one thing we learn in Bridge 101, it is that a new suit by responder is forcing. As with every aspect of the game, there are exceptions.

## ❖ Over Notrump overcalls

When your partner opens the bidding with one of a suit and right-hand opponent overcalls 1NT, you should double for penalty with a decent hand. Some people like to have 10 or more points; some like to have a good suit. Your agreements about the strength of the double must be based on your understanding of partner’s opening bid. If you have sound openers, you need less to make a penalty double.

At any rate, if the double is your strength-showing bid, then bidding a new suit is non-forcing and just competitive. You might have a hand such as:

♠QJ10753 ♥3 ♦976 ♣Q43.

Partner opens 1♣ and RHO overcalls 1NT. This is a perfect non-forcing 2♠ bid. You are likely to make 2♠ opposite many opening hands. If you go down, it is likely they were about to make 1NT. You have also prevented your LHO from bidding at the two-level.

## ❖ Over takeout doubles

When your partner opens the bidding with one of a suit and RHO doubles, your partnership needs to have agreements about the message a

new suit by you sends. Many people play that a new suit at the one level is natural and forcing (example: 1♣ – Dbl – 1♥), so that you can still find a fit in a major if you have it. A new suit at the two level, however, whether or not it is a jump bid, is not forcing.

This auction needs discussion:

West	Partner	East	You
Pass	1♣	Dbl	2♥

Some play it like a weak two-bid (a six-card suit with reasonable strength in the suit), and some play like a weak jump shift (a six-card suit with a hand too weak to respond containing five or fewer high-card points). Whatever your agreement is, the bid is not forcing.

Even if you do not jump in a new suit, the bid is not forcing. For example:

West	Partner	East	You
Pass	1♦	Dbl	2♣

This shows clubs and suggests a defense or a desire to compete if the opponents are bidding the majors. If you had 10 or more points as the responder, you could redouble to show strength or use a form of something called the Jordan convention (by bidding 2NT) if you have a raise for partner’s suit.

## ❖ Over partner’s 1NT rebid

When partner opens one of a suit and rebids 1NT, he is showing a very descriptive, limited hand. He should have a balanced hand, two or three cards in your suit and 12–14 points. That makes you, the responder, captain for the partnership.

If you bid a lower-ranking suit



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at the two level, it is not forcing. Basically, you are asking partner to choose between your suits. Suppose you hold:

♠A8643 ♥Q9742 ♦5 ♣75.

Partner opens 1♣ and rebids 1NT over your 1♠ response. You want to play in a partscore in your longest trump fit. Because partner has limited his hand, your 2♥ rebid says pass or correct back to spades. Do not think about doing anything else. Please.

If you have a better hand — one that is invitational or even game-forcing — you have to bid something else. You can bid 2NT or 3NT or jump in a new suit to show an unbalanced hand.

## ❖ When you are a passed hand

It is difficult to make partner bid again when you are a passed hand. New suits are definitely not forcing. So if you have support for partner’s major suit, you better show it to him immediately. There may not be a second chance.

A new suit by responder is forcing? Sometimes.

*Notes from ACBL Accredited Teachers*