



Adventures in Bridge

Leaders in Bridge Entertainment and Education

www.advinbridge.com

This Week in Bridge

(369) 2 over 1 Game-Forcing Responses

© AiB

Level: 3 of 10 (1 of 6)

Robert S. Todd

robert@advinbridge.com

General

2 over 1 Game Forcing (2/1 GF) bids are the core of a modern approach to constructive bidding. The primary idea is that when partner opens at the 1-level and we bid a new suit at the 2-level (not a jump shift), this is a game forcing bid – meaning neither Opener nor Responder can play a contract below game. This allows both players to confidently describe their hands – knowing that their bids are forcing. Let's take a look at these 2/1 GF auctions in more detail.

2/1 Game Forcing Responses

- 1♠ - 2♣
- 1♠ - 2♦
- 1♠ - 2♥
- 1♥ - 2♦
- 1♥ - 2♣
- 1♦ - 2♣ (We'll discuss this auction in more detail in our next lesson.)

These are all of the “2/1 Game Forcing” responses.

After our auction begins with a 2/1 Game Forcing bid (we “create the game forcing auction”) we change our perspective on the rest of the auction. We know that we are going to bid game, so we can now turn our focus to other questions:

- Which game are we going to play – 4-Major, 3NT, or 5-minor?
 - We need information about partner's shape and location of honors in order to make this decision.
- Are we going beyond game (to slam)?
 - We need information about any additional values that partner might have (extreme shape or extra HCP) to make slam possible.



Responding 1NT to 1-Major (1NT Semi-Forcing)

In *Standard American* bidding, a 2-level response shows 10+ points and responding 1NT shows about 6-9 points. Once we adopt 2/1 GF (showing 12+ pts for a 2-level response) we need to figure out what to do with the 10-11 pts hands that we used to respond with at the 2-level. These hands are not good enough to respond with at the 2-level - so we will need to bid 1NT with them as well. This new “wide-ranging” 1NT response (6-9 or 10-11 pts) is called *1NT Semi-Forcing*. Using 1NT Semi-Forcing we generally expect Opener to make a rebid after our 1NT response and we can further describe our hand with our second bid.

Note: We only expect Opener to pass 1NT with a balanced minimum (12-13 pts) opening bid.

Responding to 1♠

Playing 2/1 GF, we no longer need a 5-card suit in order to respond at the 2-level in a minor. 2-level responses promise good values, 12+ HCP, but only promise 5-cards when responding with a Major.

- 1♠ - 2♣ usually 4+card ♣ suit, 12+ HCP
- 1♠ - 2♦ 4+card ♦ suit, 12+ HCP
- 1♠ - 2♥ 5+card ♥ suit, 12+ HCP

Note: With 3-4-3-3 and 12+ pts we must “lie” and bid 2♣, though we know we are going to play in ♠ since we have at least a 5-3 fit.

Responding to 1♥

When partner opens the bidding 1♥, we strive to make a 2/1 GF bid when we have 12+ points and no large fit for partner (not 4-card ♥ support). Our 2/1 GF bids promise similar holdings as they did over a 1♠ opening bid.

If we have a 4-card ♠ suit and a 4-card minor, then we may choose to bypass this 4-card ♠ suit and create a 2/1 GF auction. This will let partner know our values and create the game forcing auction. If we do bypass our 4-card ♠ suit, then it is our responsibility to come back and bid the suit later.

Example 1

♠ KJ93

♥ 43

♦ A98

♣ KQ83

1♥ 2♣

2NT 3♠

After we create the 2/1 GF auction, we need to show our 4-card ♠ suit. The Opener implied a balanced hand, but if Opener was 4-5-2-2 they may have chosen to rebid 2NT. We must find the 4-4 ♠ fit.



If we have a 5+card ♠ suit we will likely need to start with 1♠ (unless maybe we have 5-6 distribution), because we will not be able to convince partner that we have a 5-card ♠ suit if we bypass it on the first round of the bidding.

Note: 1♥ – 2♠ is not a 2/1 GF bid. This auction is a jump shift and is either weak or strong based on your agreements (the modern standard is to play this as a weak bid).

When Not to Make a 2/1 GF Bid with a Strong Hand after a 1-Major Opening

There are only a few hands where we have 12+ HCP and do not make a 2/1 GF bid. The first is when we have long ♠ (a 5+card suit) after a 1♥ opening. Most of the others are hands that can be described in one call or have other conventional tools available. Some examples of these hands are *Jacoby 2NT*, *Splinters*, or *3NT – choice of game bids*.

Conclusion

Most players think that playing 2/1 Game Forcing is a “big change” from Standard American bidding, but this is generally not the case. By adjusting the beginning of your auctions, making 2-level bids stronger and a 1NT response (1NT Semi-Forcing) a little wider ranging, you can simplify much of the future bidding. Both you and partner are assured that the auction cannot stop below game and this makes exploring slam or finding the “best” game much easier. Try making this change to your system (or teaching to your partner from day 1) and see how quickly it will feel natural.