

Forcing Bids

Some bids are forcing, others are not. Some are game forcing, and some are only forcing one round. How do you know when a bid should be forcing?

In many situations, the “system” you’re playing will influence which bids are forcing and which are not. We’ll assume basic 2-over-1 with a limited number of conventions.

Bidding without competition

Which bids are forcing?

1. A new suit by an unpassed responder is forcing one round
2. A reverse by opener is forcing one round
3. A new suit after a suit has been agreed upon is forcing one round
4. Any bid after opener has jumped is forcing to game
5. A 2c opener is typically game forcing; with a weak responder, it’s forcing to 2NT or 3 of a major
6. A jump shift by opener is game forcing
7. *Any* bid after a game force has been established is forcing to the level of game
8. A new suit by responder after you’ve preempted is forcing (depending on partnership agreements)
9. Conventional bids (e.g., splinters, Jacoby 2NT, Drury etc.) are forcing

What’s not forcing?

1. A limited raise of opener’s suit
2. A new suit bid by a passed hand
3. A jump by opener in original suit
4. A new suit bid by responder at the two level when opener has rebid 1NT
5. Whenever opener or responder bid a natural NT (i.e., excluding conventional bids)

Bidding with competition

In competition, forcing and non-forcing bids change.

What's forcing?

1. A cuebid or jump cuebid of the opponents' suit
2. A new suit after an opponent preempts and your partner overcalls
3. A new suit by an unpassed responder after you've overcalled at the 2 level

What's not forcing?

1. A new suit by responder after you've overcalled at the 1 level
2. A new suit by responder after either a natural 1NT overcall or a double by opponents
3. Any simple raise of your suit

General guidelines

There are some general rules you can use to guide your actions in new situations:

1. A new suit bid by an unpassed responder outside of competition is forcing.
2. If you don't understand whether a bid is forcing or not, assume it's forcing
3. If you are in the passout seat in a competitive auction, and your left-hand opponent has made a forcing bid which your right-hand opponent has passed, don't balance.