



More Frequently Asked Questions

The following questions are discussed in the context of the 2/1 game forcing approach, but many of the ideas can be applied to standard methods.



How many points does opener need to bid a new suit at the three level?

Here's an example of an auction where opener bids a new suit at the three level:

WEST (OPENER)	EAST (RESPONDER)
1♠	2♥
3♦	

West's 3♦ bid takes up a lot of room on the Bidding Ladder. The partnership hasn't agreed on **WHERE** to play the contract, and it may still need to decide **How HIGH**, game or slam. If responder doesn't have much strength in clubs, there's not much room to explore for a stopper without getting past 3NT.

So the basic guideline is:

OPENER'S NEW SUIT AT THE 3-LEVEL

A new suit by opener at the three level shows either:

- Extra strength ... or
- Extra distribution.

WEST	EAST
♠ A K 10 6 4	♠ J 5
♥ 7	♥ A K J 4 2
♦ A K J 5	♦ Q 7 4
♣ K 9 2	♣ J 6 3

WEST	EAST
1♠	2♥
3♦	3♠
3NT	Pass

With 18 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card spade suit, West has plenty of extra strength to show the diamond suit after East's 2♥ response. East is a bit awkwardly placed over the 3♦ bid, not wanting to bid 3NT with so little strength in clubs. East simply gives preference to opener's first suit. However, West can comfortably bid 3NT, having described the hand.

WEST	EAST
♠ 5	♠ J 6 3
♥ K Q 8 6 2	♥ 5
♦ 6 4	♦ A K Q 7 2
♣ A Q J 4 3	♣ K 10 6 2

WEST	EAST
1♥	2♦
3♣	4♣
5♣	Pass

This time, West has only 12 high-card points, but good distribution with the two five-card suits. Over the 2♦ response, it's important for opener to show the second suit; otherwise it might get lost in the auction. After East raises opener's club suit, the partnership gets to the best game.

With a stronger hand, opener could cuebid or bid Blackwood over the raise, and the partnership might get to a slam.

With neither extra values nor extra distribution, opener cannot afford to show the second suit at the three level, even if it means a notrump rebid with an unbalanced hand.

WEST	EAST
♠ Q 8 4	♠ J 6 3
♥ A K 8 6 2	♥ 5
♦ 6	♦ A K Q 7 2
♣ Q J 4 3	♣ K 10 6 2
WEST	EAST
1♥	2♦
2NT	3NT
Pass	

With a minimum hand of 12 high-card points plus 1 point for the five-card heart suit, and with no second five-card suit, West settles for a 2NT rebid after the 2♦ response. With a minimum hand for the 2/1 response, East simply raises to game.

The club suit never gets mentioned. That's a good thing in this case. If West had shown the club suit, East would raise, and the partnership would go past the good contract of 3NT and likely land in 5♣, which has three top losers, the ♠A-K and ♣A.

The club suit would not necessarily be lost if East had extra values, making 5♣ or even 6♣ a reasonable spot. For example:

WEST	EAST
♠ Q 8 4	♠ A J 6
♥ A K 8 6 2	♥ 5
♦ 6	♦ A K Q 7 2
♣ Q J 4 3	♣ K 10 6 2

WEST	EAST
1♥	2♦
2NT	3♣
4♣	4NT
5♦	6♣
Pass	

Here East is too strong to simply settle for game over the 2NT rebid and shows the club suit. West raises, and the partnership gets to slam.

If opener's rebid is 2NT when holding a minimum, semi-balanced hand, the auction will usually go smoothly to the best contract.

If the partnership uses 2/1 Game Force, does it still need a strong jump shift?

Responder's jump shift is a new suit response one level higher than necessary:

WEST (OPENER)	EAST (RESPONDER)
1♠	3♦

The classic use of the jump shift was to show a very strong hand, about 19 or more valuation points, and interest in getting to slam. Such hands are rare, so most of today's partnerships drop the requirements for a strong jump shift to about 17 or more points.

The jump shift takes up a lot of bidding room, which can make it more difficult for the partnership to decide **WHERE** to play the contract.

For example, suppose the opening bid is 1♠ and responder has this hand. There are 19 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card diamond suit. Certainly enough strength for a jump shift. The partnership is likely headed for a slam. However, a jump to 3♦ would likely get the partnership off to a poor start. We might belong in diamonds, hearts, spades, or notrump. How can we explore all these possibilities in the little room remaining to us?

We want to conserve space with such a complex hand, and that is one of the big advantages of the 2/1 Game Force approach. A simple response of 2♦ will give us all the room we need to uncover **WHERE** we belong before moving on to slam. We don't want to throw away this advantage by jumping to 3♦.

I don't like using strong jump shifts when playing 2/1 Game Force. There are many other uses that can be made for this bid. For example:

RESPONDER'S JUMP SHIFT IN 2/1

- A jump shift to the three level is natural and invitational.
- A jump shift to the two level is weak (preemptive).

The Invitational Jump Shift

A jump shift to the three level shows about 9-11 points with at least a good six-card suit. This makes it easy to handle some hands that might otherwise be awkward in 2/1.

WEST	EAST
♠ Q J 8 5 2	♠ 3
♥ A K 9 5	♥ J 8 3
♦ A 10	♦ K 3 2
♣ J 5	♣ A Q 10 9 4 3

WEST	EAST
1♠	3♣
3NT	Pass

With 10 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card club suit, East doesn't have quite enough for a game-forcing 2♣ response. Instead, East makes an invitational jump shift to 3♣. West has no difficulty placing the partnership in the excellent 3NT.

If the partnership did not have the invitational jump shift available, the auction might start off:

WEST	EAST
1♠	1NT
2♥	3♣?
Pass?	

East has an awkward choice if rebid. Passing would be pessimistic; 2NT would give up on a partscore in clubs; 3♣ could be made with a much weaker hand. If East chooses 3♣, West might pass.

Using the jump to the three level as invitational allows the partnership to stop in the best partscore when responder has a weak hand by using the forcing 1NT response.

WEST	EAST
♠ Q J 8 5 2	♠ 3
♥ A K 9 5	♥ J 8
♦ A 10	♦ K 3 2
♣ J 5	♣ Q 10 9 7 4 3 2

WEST	EAST
1♠	1NT
2♥	3♣
Pass	

West has no problem passing 3♣ in this auction. Responder must have a weak hand with a long club suit. With an invitational hand, responder would have jumped to 3♣ initially.

The Weak Jump Shift

There is some advantage to playing a jump shift to the two level as forcing, since a one-level response is not forcing to game. As discussed earlier, however, 17+ hands for responder are rare, and such hands can always be handled by starting with a one-level response and making further forcing bids, such as fourth suit forcing. So many partnerships use a jump shift to the two level to show a weak hand with a decent six-card or longer suit.

WEST	EAST
♠ 8	♠ K J 10 9 7 3
♥ K Q 6 4	♥ 7 3
♦ A K Q 10 7	♦ 8 4
♣ K 9 5	♣ 7 6 2

WEST	EAST
1♦	2♠
Pass	

With a good six-card suit, but barely enough to respond, East makes a weak jump shift to 2♠. West has a strong hand, but a poor fit for partner's suit and is not tempted to bid any higher. East-West stop in a good partscore.

If the partnership did not have the weak jump shift available, the auction might go something like this:

WEST	EAST
1♦	1♠
2♥	2♠
2NT	?

East's first decision is whether to respond at all. Having bid 1♠, East can't pass opener's reverse to 2♥ and rebids the suit. Opener, expecting a better hand, would probably bid again. Now the partnership is likely headed for a minus score.

WEST	EAST
♠ 5 2	♠ Q J 9 7 6 4 3
♥ A 9 5	♥ 7 4
♦ K 8 7	♦ 6 4
♣ A J 10 8 3	♣ Q 6

WEST	EAST
1♣	2♠
Pass	

A weak jump shift can be effective as a preempt. On these combined hands, the opponents are likely to be able to make 4♥, but may have a difficult time coming into the auction over East's jump to 2♠. ♦