



The Principle of Fast Arrival

One advantage of going directly to game without make any ‘extra’ bids is that it gives less information to the opponents. They may not get off to the best opening lead, and they may have difficulty finding the best defense thereafter. There is also the preemptive factor. Jumping right to game makes it tougher for the opponents to come into the auction with an overcall or double.

Consider these two hands:

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

WEST	EAST
1♠	2♦ ★
2♠	4♠
Pass	

After West opens 1♠, East’s 2♦ response commits the partnership to the game level. West has a nice hand but simply shows the extra length in spades by rebidding the suit. There will be lots of time to show the extra strength later.

At this point, East ‘knows’ **WHERE** the partnership belongs: Spades. With a minimum for the 2/1 response—12 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card suit—East also ‘knows’ **How High**: Game. Unless West has considerable extra values, slam is unlikely.

Using the principle of fast arrival, East wastes no more time and jumps directly to game. West would like to bid more but is warned by the jump to game that East has no interest in slam. The partnership does well to stop in game. Slam has no chance, and a five-level contract could be defeated if the spade finesse loses.

Let’s give East a stronger hand:

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

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

The auction starts the same way, but after West’s 2♠ rebid, East takes the ‘slow’ approach by raising to only 3♠, safe in the knowledge that West can’t pass because game has not yet been reached. Why? East knows **WHERE** the contract belongs—spades—but is not sure **How High**. East has enough extra strength that slam is still a possibility.

Over East’s 3♠ raise, West is happy to have the opportunity to cooperate in looking for slam. West *cuebids* 4♥ to show some values in that suit, and the partnership is on its way. How the auction continues depends on the partnership’s slam bidding methods, but East and West are likely to reach the excellent 6♠ contract.

Let’s try another example.

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

WEST	EAST
1♥	2♣ ★
3♣	4♥
Pass	

As soon as West opens 1♥, East is planning to take the partnership to 4♥. However, an immediate jump to 4♥ would be preemptive, and East can’t make some form of forcing raise—such as Jacoby 2NT—with only three-card support. So East ‘temporizes’ by bidding a new suit, with no intention of actually playing in clubs.

One of the major advantages of the 2/1 game forcing response ★ is that it allows the partnership to take its time exploring for the best contract and deciding whether there is enough extra strength to consider a slam. Neither partner is worried about a bid being passed below the game level. So why would either player jump to game after a 2/1 response and use up some of the extra bidding room? It has to do with the *principle of fast arrival*. Let’s look at this interesting—and controversial—topic.

The Principle of Fast Arrival

The basic guideline for fast arrival is:

PRINCIPLE OF FAST ARRIVAL

When the partnership has found a fit and is committed to the game level:

- Bidding *quickly* to game shows no interest in slam.
- Bidding *slowly* toward game shows interest in slam.

It’s actually an extension of the KISS approach. If we know **How High** and **WHERE** the partnership belongs, we should get there directly before something goes wrong. “The one who knows...goes!”

After West shows the club support, East follows through with the plan to put the partnership in game in hearts. The jump to 4♥ tells West that East has a minimum for the 2/1 response with little help outside of clubs and hearts. West is happy to pass.

Let's give East a better hand:

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

WEST	EAST
1♥	2♣ ★
3♣	3♥
4♦	4♥
Pass	

Now East bids only 3♥ over West's raise, leaving lots of room to explore slam. West cooperates by cuebidding the ♦A. East is worried about spades, however, and can't afford to venture beyond game. West also has nothing in spades, so the partnership stops at the game level. But at least the possibility of slam was investigated.

Fast Arrival Is Not a Signoff

Fast arrival does not rule out the possibility of slam when partner has considerable extra values.

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

WEST	EAST
1♠	2♥ ★
2♠	4♠
4NT	5♥
6♠	Pass

With a minimum for the 2/1 response, East jumps to game over the 2♠ rebid. That doesn't deter West from going to slam once East shows a fit for spades, along with enough strength for a 2/1 game forcing response.

Both Partner's Can Play

Responder isn't the only one who can use fast arrival. Sometimes opener can show a minimum by taking the fast route to game when a slower route is available.

WEST	EAST
♠ A K J 7 5	♠ 8 2
♥ K J 6 2	♥ A Q 10 7 4
♦ 8 4	♦ K Q 6
♣ 9 8	♣ Q 7 4
WEST	EAST
1♠	2♥ ★
4♥	Pass

West likes East's 2♥ response, but has a minimum opening bid with no help outside of hearts and spades. West quickly takes the partnership to game. East knows that opener could have simply raised to 3♥ to leave more room for slam exploration.

West's jump to game is sometimes referred to as a *picture bid*. It paints a nice picture of the West hand: a minimum opening bid with most of the high cards in hearts and spades. With extra values, or high cards in clubs and diamonds, West could raise to 3♥. With shortness in clubs or diamonds, West could make a *splinter* jump to 4♣ or 4♦, if the partnership uses that convention.

The overlap among concepts such as 'fast arrival' and 'picture bids' is one reason that fast arrival is a somewhat controversial subject. Not all experts agree on the best use of a jump to game in some sequences.

Still, it's a good idea to have some partnership agreement about whether jumps to game show minimum values or extra values! So the principle of fast arrival is a useful guideline.

Other Uses of Fast Arrival

The concept of fast arrival arises in many situations that have nothing to do with 2/1. For example, what message do you think West is sending in this auction?

WEST	EAST
1♠	2♠
3♦	3♠
4♠?	

West is making a slam try! If West merely want to play at the game level after East raised to 2♠, West would have jumped to 4♠. If West was simply trying for game with the 3♦ bid, West would have passed when East showed nothing extra by

bidding 3♠. So we can infer from West's 'slow' approach that West is actually interested in more than game.

♠ A K 8 7 5 2	West might have a hand like this. If
♥ —	East had shown
♦ Q 10 7 3	some interest over
♣ A K 7	the 3♦ bid, West

was willing to take a shot at slam. When East shows no interest, West settles for game.

Here's one final example in a competitive situation.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	2♦	3♦	Double
?			

After North overcalls 2♦, East's *cuebid* of the opponents' suit shows a limit raise (10-12 points and four-card spade support) or better. West is expected to bid 3♠ to turn down the invitation, or jump to 4♠ to accept the invitation.

With a minimum opening bid and the ♦Q being of dubious value, West is planning to reject the invitation and bid 3♠. But what should West do when South doubles?

South's double, which presumably shows something in diamonds, gives West an additional option. West could pass. Passing certainly sounds weaker than bidding 3♠, and many players would take this approach. Adherents of fast arrival, however, might see things differently.

Since East's *cuebid* committed the partnership to at least 3♠, getting there quickly—by bidding 3♠—would show no interest in going any further. Taking the slow route—by passing—would show some interest!

As you can see, the principle of fast arrival is a fascinating concept. You might want to discuss it with your partner to see if you are on the same wavelength! ♦

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