

1 NT *Forcing*

A One Round Force after Your Partner Opens One of a Major Presented by Mike Savage

Originally a **1NT** bid by responder over any suit showed 6-9/10 HCP and was not forcing. As players began to require a five-card suit to open one of a major, they noticed that they were sometimes playing **1NT** when they should be playing in a two-level suit contract. So they proposed making a **1NT** response over a major *forcing* in order to find the best part-score contract. They also realized that if **1NT** was a forcing bid, it could be used for other things as well. It could be used to make an invitational (limit) raise in opener's major with three trumps and reserve the immediate jump raise of the major to always show at least four trumps. Also, now you could invite game in no-trump with a balanced hand by bidding **1NT** (forcing) and then re-bidding **2NT** over a two-level rebid by partner. Finally you could stop at the two-level in a new suit or you could invite game by jumping (or bidding) to the three-level in a long suit, after having bid **1NT**. Playing **1NT** as *forcing* is most effective when you are a non-passed hand. The downside is that if you play **1NT Forcing**, you occasionally will play at the two-level in a suit when **1NT** really *is* the best contract.

If you play Two-Over-One, **1NT Forcing** should be a part of your system. Playing Standard American with 5-card majors, using **1NT Forcing** *might* have a slight advantage but not forcing works about as well.

The following is a fairly standard presentation of the structure of **1NT Forcing**.

1H – 1NT: Forcing one round by a non-passed hand and normally denies opening values or four spades.

Rebids by opener over a forcing 1NT:

2C = Shows three or more clubs (unless you have 4-5-2-2 without the strength to reverse), denies four diamonds, 12-17/18 HCP. If you are 3-3 (or 2-2) in the minors, it is suggested that you always bid **2C**, allowing your partner to pass with five or six clubs. With 4-5-2-2 and a minimum, *some* choose to rebid a great 5-card heart suit instead.

2D = Shows at least three diamonds with longer diamonds than clubs and 12-17/18 HCP.

Rebids by responder over a 2C or 2D response to a forcing 1NT:

Pass = Shows a weak hand with 6-8/9 HCP. With a stiff or void heart, you could have a four-card fit in the minor; with two hearts, you should have five or more.

2D (over **2C**) = Shows a weak hand with 6-8/9 HCP, a six+ card suit (possibly a good five-card suit) with *at most* two cards in opener's major.

2H = Shows a weak hand of about 6-9 HCP, usually with exactly two-card support.

Continuation by opener over 2D and 2H above:

2NT = Shows a balanced or semi-balanced hand of 16-18 HCP, invites **3NT**.

2S (optional) = This rare bid could be used in two different ways, both artificial:

#1. Shows an invitational **2NT** bid but without a spade stopper.

#2. Shows a highly invitational raise of opener's minor.

2NT = Natural and invitational to **3NT** with about 10+ to 12 HCP.

3C/3D = A raise of **2C** or **2D** needs 5+ card support while **2C-3D** shows a good 6-card suit, all with about 9-11 HCP but **3C** over **2D** shows a 6+ card suit and is to play.

3H = Shows three hearts with about 10-12 HCP.

2H = Shows six hearts (might be 4-5-2-2 with great hearts) and 12-15 HCP.

2S = Shows at least four spades and 16/17-20 HCP.

2NT = Shows a balanced hand with five hearts, 18-19 HCP and is almost forcing to game.

3NT = Shows a balanced or semi-balanced hand too good to be passed in **2NT** (19 golden). Some make this bid with a solid 6-card major, 18-19 HCP, balanced with stoppers.

1S – 1NT: Forcing one round by a non-passed hand and normally denies opening values.

Responses by opener:

2C = Shows at least three clubs, denies four hearts, 12-17/18 HCP. It is suggested that you bid **2C** when you are 3-3 in the minors, allowing partner to pass with 5 or 6.

2D = Shows at least three diamonds, denies four hearts, 12-17/18 HCP.

Rebids by responder over a 2C or 2D response to a forcing 1NT:

Pass = Shows a weak hand with 6-8/9 HCP. With a stiff or void spade, you could have a four-card fit in the minor; with two spades, you should have five or more.

2D (over **2C**) = Shows a weak hand with 6-8/9 HCP, usually six diamonds (possibly a good five-card suit) with *at most* two cards in opener's major.

2H = Shows a weak hand of 6-8/9 HCP and at least five good hearts. If you have two-card spade support, normally you should have a six-card heart suit.

2S = Shows a weak hand of about 6-9 HCP, usually with exactly two-card support.

Continuation by opener over responder's 2D, 2H and 2S rebid:

2NT = Shows a balanced or semi-balanced hand of 16-18 HCP, invites **3NT**.

2NT = Natural and invitational to **3NT** with about 10+ to 12 HCP.

3C/3D/3H = A raise of **2C** or **2D** needs 5+ card support, a **3H** bid shows a good 6-card suit, all with about 9-11 HCP but **3C** over **2D** shows a 6+ card suit and is to play.

3S = Shows three spades with about 10-12 HCP.

2H = Shows at least four hearts and 12-17/18 HCP.

2S = Shows six spades and 12-15 HCP.

2NT = Shows a balanced hand with five spades, 18-19 points and is almost forcing to game.

3NT = Shows a balanced or semi-balanced hand too good to be passed in **2NT** (19 golden). Some also make this bid with a solid 6-card major, 18-19 HCP, balanced with stoppers.

Playing **1NT Forcing**, if opener doesn't have a 6-card major or any other 4-card suit, he must rebid two of a 3-card minor over a **1NT** response when he has a minimum opening hand. With 18-19 HCP and a balanced or semi-balanced hand, opener will usually raise **1NT** to **2NT** and any bid after that is *game forcing*.

There are some very minor variations in the way **1NT Forcing** is played. Although not considered the best method, a few players raise **1NT** to **2NT** with only 16-17/18 HCP and bid **3NT** with a good 18 to 19.

Some experts play that over **1H**, a one spade response is artificial, showing a **1NT** bid and that a **1NT** bid shows **1S** response. This treatment allows opener to then rebid **1NT** over **1S** with 4-5-2-2 distribution and bid (raise to) **2S** over **1NT** with four-card support with minimum hands. This approach generally works well (if you remember it!) but is currently only allowed in Mid-Chart events.

Another variation is to use **1NT Forcing** to differentiate between a constructive simple raise of opener's major and a weak raise. Playing this, **1H** or **1S-1NT 2-of-a-minor 2H** or **2S** shows a weak simple raise and a direct raise to two of opener's major shows about 8/9-10 HCP. The downside of this method is that after a new suit bid, opener never knows when you now support his major if you have two or three-card support.

If you play that **1H-1NT 2C** or **2D-2S** shows an *extremely* strong raise in opener's minor, as shown in option #2 above (your hand re-evaluates to an opening hand or better), then a simple raise of a **2C** or **2D** rebid is limited to about 8-10 HCP along with the required good five or six-card support.

Among players who use a **2NT** response to **1H** or **1S** as a forcing balanced raise (Jacoby 2NT), some bid **1NT** with a minimum balanced opening hand, planning to bid **3NT** on their next turn to bid.