

How to tell if a bid is FORCING or NON-FORCING or INVITATIONAL

After a single raise, a new suit by opener is always forcing.

♠ 76	If this hand opens 1 ♣, and partner bids 2 ♣ (invitational, 6-10),
♥ AQ2	then this hand would love to be in NT instead of in the minor.
♦ A6	A bid here of 2 ♥ is 100% forcing, showing a ♥ stopper. The hand
♣ AK8765	is looking to see if partner can stop ♠s, so they can safely bid 3 NT. (They rate to make 6 ♣ tricks and 2 red aces so far...) This action shows a strong hand of 16+ HCP.

When responder makes the 2 ♣ call, showing a minimum and 5 pieces in ♣s, he figures he's done bidding. But once opener tosses in a new suit, it's forcing, and responder must bid again!

Remember that a new suit by responder is always forcing. This is not always the case with a new suit by opener. But if you have established suit agreement, then opener's new suit will always ask a question. Make sure that you and partner have agreements about what these questions will be.

NOT FORCING

1 ♦ 1 ♥

1 ♠ ← If responder has a very weak hand (5-6 points) with both majors, he may pass this! Since opener didn't jump the ♠ bid, opener's hand cannot be VERY STRONG, so with a very weak hand, game will not be possible. It's okay to pass the ♠ fit here.

INVITATIONAL

1 ♣ 1 ♥

3 ♥ ← This jump can be translated as "partner, I know you have at least 6 points. If that is all you have, then please pass this invitation. But if you're more toward the high side, with say 8-9+, we belong in game. I have around 16-18 points."

ALSO INVITATIONAL

1 ♥ 3 ♥ ← This responder has a "limit raise" -- it's a raise of partner's suit, but the hand is limited to 10- a bad 12 points. It's inviting opener to game if they have a little bit more than "just an opening hand."

FORCING

1 ♠ 2 ♠

3 ♣ ← Responder may never pass this. It's not showing ♣s because opener wants to play in ♣s. It's asking a question (according to your agreement). We still want to play in ♠s!

Board 2

East Deals
None Vul

	♠ 9 6										
	♥ Q 7 6 5										
	♦ A Q 8										
	♣ 10 7 6 4										
♠ K 10 3 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A Q J 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K 10 8 2		♥ 9 3									
♦ J 9 4		♦ 7 6 5									
♣ A 2		♣ K Q J 5									
	♠ 8 7 4										
	♥ A J 4										
	♦ K 10 3 2										
	♣ 9 8 3										
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>								
		1 ♣	Pass								
1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠	Pass								
3 ♠	All pass										

Auction Commentary:

Opener shows 12-21 HCP and 3+ ♣s. Responder bids the lower-ranking major first, going up the line. Opener bids the next 4-card suit, 1 ♠, which denies holding 4 pieces in the ♥ suit.

Responder now has an 8-card major suit fit and needs to describe to opener "HOW HIGH."

2 ♠ = invitational with 6-10 points

3 ♠ = invitational with 11-12 points

So, adding an extra point for the doubleton club, responder invites with 3 ♠. But Opener has a minimum hand and passes.

Opening Lead: 2 ♦ (unbid suit) *Remember BOSTON leads - a low card promises an honor!*


Planning the Play: Counting losers, there are 2 ♥ losers, so we'll plan to lead TOWARD the K♥, hoping the A♥ is with South (in front of the King!). No ♠ losers, if trumps break nicely. ♣s are solid, no losers there. There are 3 immediate ♦ losers on that lead, though!

Losing 3 ♦ and the A♥, it's a good thing Opener passed this at the 3-level!

Takeaway:

All jumps in OLD suits, both as opener or as responder, are INVITATIONAL and can be passed!

Board 7
 South Deals
 None Vul

♠ K 10 6 ♥ A K 9 5 ♦ 9 6 3 ♣ 10 7 5	♠ Q 9 5 ♥ J 8 6 ♦ K 4 ♣ 9 8 6 4 3	♠ J 8 7 4 ♥ Q 7 4 ♦ 7 5 ♣ K Q J 2	
			
	♠ A 3 2 ♥ 10 3 2 ♦ A Q J 10 8 2 ♣ A		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 ♦
Pass	1 N	Pass	3 ♦
All pass			

Auction Commentary:

Opener shows 12-21 HCP, and 3 or more ♦s. Responder denies a 4-card major suit. It's not a pretty hand, but with 6 HCP responder must bid: 1 NT it is! Since opener is unbalanced, and has no second suit to bid, they rebid the original suit -- but with this medium strength hand, opener jumps one level showing the invitational strength and a 6-card suit. Responder has nothing extra, though, and passes the invitation.

Opening Lead: A♥ (promising the K♥)

Planning the Play: Counting losers, we find 2 ♠ losers and 3 ♥ losers -- one too many! After drawing trumps, declarer knows they must finesse the ♠ suit.

So, lead a small ♠ up to the Q♠, hoping the K♠ is with LHO. If it pops up, the Q♠ will be a trick next... and if it doesn't, be sure to insert the Q♠ anyway. When the King is "on side," it will win. And if the King is not on side, it will lose, and nobody can make this contract :)

Takeaway:

When the only honors you own in a suit are the Ace on one side and the Queen on the other, NEVER lead WITH the Queen. When it loses, you just promoted their Jack for them. :(

In this and other cases, lead TOWARD the card that you want to take the trick!

Board 12
 West Deals
 None Vul

♠ 10 2	♠ K Q 9 8	♠ 7 6 5 4									
♥ A Q 7 6 5 4	♥ 10 2	♥ K J 8 3									
♦ A K 4	♦ Q 10 3 2	♦ 6									
♣ 5 2	♣ Q 10 9	♣ A 8 7 4									
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	♠ A J 3										
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<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>									
1 ♥	Pass	3 ♥									
4 ♥	All pass	Pass									

Invitational Bids using Dummy Points

Auction Commentary: 1 ♥ shows 12-21 HCP and a 5+ piece major suit. Having found a fit, responder upgrades the hand for the singleton ♦, adding 3 extra dummy points. He invites opener to game, showing 11-12 working points. Opener accepts with 2 extra working points, extra trump length, and two doubletons.

Opening Lead: K♠ (promising the Q♠ and denying the A♠) Top of 2 cards touching.

Planning the Play: In a suit contract, count your LOSERS first, from the position of the master hand. Here, that hand is the one with the long trumps, the West hand.

2 ♠ losers - partner cannot help with those.

2 ♣ losers - partner's A♣ takes care of 1 of them, but can't do anything about the other one

1 ♦ loser - partner provided a singleton there, so the 4 ♦ will be ruffed in dummy

So, we started with 5 losers, and we ended up with 3 - making game!

Takeaway:

Remember to re-evaluate your hand when you have a "Golden 8-card major suit Fit." Otherwise, you may be playing in 2 ♥ instead of 4 ♥, making "the dreaded 170" instead of getting the game bonus!