



THE BIDDING TOOLKIT

New Minor Forcing

After opener rebids 1NT, responder often finds it useful to make a low-level forcing bid. Frequently this is done to see if opener has three-card support for responder's suit.

Suppose as responder you hold ♠Q76 ♥AJ1063 ♦K75 ♣J10.

Consider your bid when the auction proceeds as follows:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1NT	?

Playing standard, you would have no good bid. You have the strength to rebid 2NT, but you would like to show your five-card heart suit. Rebidding hearts, however, should show a six-card suit and a non-forcing hand. Therefore, you may choose to raise 1NT to 2NT. The problem with this bid is that if opener has a minimum, he would have to pass and you may have a 5-3 heart fit. In fact, 2♥ may be the best contract if partner is minimum.

The most popular method is to use the unbid minor suit as responder's forcing call, hence the name new minor forcing. In the example above, responder could bid 2♦. This promises at least invitational values and is a one-round force.

How does it work?

Suppose, you have: ♠KQ1074 ♥J42 ♦K75 ♣Q10, and the auction is:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
1NT	?

You should use new minor forcing, which in this case is 2♣.

How should partner respond?

Partner's first obligation is to support your major (spades in this case). His second obligation is to show the strength of his hand. This is a scheme used by many:

2♦ = denies three spades or four hearts, minimum

2♥ = shows four hearts, may be minimum or maximum

2♠ = shows three-card spade support, minimum

2NT = denies four hearts or three spades, maximum

3♦ = denies four hearts or three spades, maximum and shows five diamonds

3♠ = shows three-card spade support, maximum

Following up

What are the continuations by responder? If partner shows a maximum, you are committed to game. Remember you promise at least invitational values to use new minor forcing.

If partner shows a minimum, any two-level bid by you can be passed. If you held the first example hand shown above,

♠Q76 ♥AJ1063 ♦K75 ♣J10, the auction should be this:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
1NT	2♣
2♦	2NT
Pass	

You know partner has a minimum, no heart fit, so you would rebid 2NT and he can pass. But if instead, you held,

♠6 ♥AJ1063 ♦K75 ♣QJ103, you may choose to rebid 2♥ to play. You know the opponents have nine or more spades (partner does not have four spades since he didn't rebid 1♠) so 2NT may not be safe. Therefore, you can play 2♥ in a 5-2 fit.

If you rebid at the three level, however, it's forcing. Suppose you hold

♠A2	♥AQ864	♦KQ53	♣K2
Opener		Responder	
1♦		1♥	
1NT		2♣	
2♦		?	

In this case, you want to force to game and also investigate slam. Bid 3♦, natural. If you use new minor forcing, then rebid at the three level, it creates a force.

Holding both majors

Sometimes you are interested in both majors. Suppose you hold this hand,

♠AQ643 ♥KQ863 ♦7 ♣K2 and the bidding is:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
1NT	2♣
2♦	?

You should bid 3♥. Remember, if you rebid at the two level after partner shows a minimum, partner can pass. You have to rebid at the three level to force.

The devil is in the details

The above is only a brief introduction to the topic. Here are some other items you and your partner may wish to discuss.

After forcing bids (by responder) at the three level, what do follow-ups mean? Should new minor forcing apply after this auction?

1♥	1♠
1NT	?

What if one of the opponents intervenes — does new minor forcing still apply? □