

Fully Qualified, Forcing or Not Forcing

To Bid or Not to Bid, That Is the Question

- Episode 1

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This is the beginning of a series of articles on forcing bids. In modern bidding one must know which bids, - made either by you or your partner, as a response or a rebid, - are forcing or can be passed. This is the foundation of good bidding.

Certain bids may be forcing by agreement. We will cover that topic in a later episode. In this article we are going to focus on the underlying theory behind the forcing vs. the non-forcing bid or rebid.

Fully Qualified Bids and rebids

It is generally accepted that if you are **not** in the process of a Two Over One auction, opener's rebid must be "**Fully Qualified**". This means that following a forcing bid by responder, opener's second bid should "fully qualify", or in other words, tell the complete story of their hand.

Specifically, what constitutes a "forcing bid" by responder? People generally say that a change of suits is forcing. This language will get you in trouble all the time. A change of suits by opener or by responder is **NOT** always forcing.

Consider a common example:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
2♣	2♦

In the above example, opener has bid a new suit following responder's bid of 1♥. This bid is not forcing, however, because it is fully qualified and ranked lower than opener's original bid of 1♦. This bid shows a minimum hand and tends to deny a Spade stopper. Otherwise opener might have rebid 1NT.

Consider a second example:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
1NT	2♦

The opening bid of 1♦ has specific meaning. In general, it promises:

- 3+♦
- tends to deny a five-card major
- tends to deny a balanced 15-17 HCP
- tends to deny a balanced 20-21 HCP

What is bid and what is not bid are equally important.

The opening bid of 1♦ is not forcing. Partner will generally respond with 6+ HCP. In the auction above, the 1♥ bid by responder **IS** forcing. Responder promises 4+♥ and 6+ HCP. The reason that 1♥ is forcing is because it is completely unqualified- meaning that: responder might have a huge hand or a minimum hand.

Opener's rebid should **fully qualify** the opening hand. In the second example, opener's 1NT rebid tends to promise 12-14 HCP, minimum values and a balanced hand with 2 or 3♥. One should not rebid 1NT in this auction with a singleton ♥. Opener would have:

- raised hearts with 4♥
- rebid 1♠ with 4♠ and a minimum hand
- opened 1NT with a balanced 15-17 HCP
- jumped to 2NT with 18-19 balanced HCP
- opened 2NT with a balanced 20-21 HCP
- jump shifted or reversed with a big hand

Is opener's rebid of 1NT a forcing bid? It is **NOT**, because the rebid of 1NT "fully qualifies" the opening hand as 12-14 balanced HCP. What about responder's rebid? Is responder's rebid forcing? No-but why not? Responder's rebid of 2♦ indicates a minimum hand which is unsuitable to play in NT and confirms a good diamond fit. In this auction the only forcing bid was 1♥ which is completely **unqualified** in terms of both heart length and hand strength. 1♥ is therefore absolutely forcing and cannot be passed by opener. The responder's rebid of 2♦ is "**preferential**" and not forcing. With an invitational hand responder would have bid 3♦.

This example illustrates some basic bidding concepts. In future episodes, we will examine many more bidding patterns which demonstrate forcing vs. non forcing bids.