

Game Forcing Jump Shifts

Sometimes (and only sometimes), opener gets a really good hand. If partner makes any response, opener would like to always get to game. The trouble, of course, is sometimes partner will pass, leaving game unbid. Take these two hands:

Opener	Responder
♠AKQx	♠xxxx
♥Jxx	♥Axxx
♦AKxxxx	♦Qx
♣-	♣xxx

1♦ - 1♥

1♠ - P

Clearly, 4♠ was a good contract to reach (it makes when the pointed suits split normally). However, responder chickened out because he had a minimum hand and didn't want to get too high.

Opener erred by giving his partner an opportunity to pass. The correct bid is not 1♠, but 2♠. This "jump" and "shift" of suits is game forcing – meaning that responder cannot pass unless opener bids a game contract (and likewise for opener).

This should feel intuitive because opener is preventing responder from stopping at the one level, in addition to making any number of minimum rebids after 1♠. This consumption of possible bids (what might be called "bidding space") signifies extra values.

Now, some pairs would probably open 2♣ with opener's hand. The trouble with this is that the ♠ suit gets buried after an auction like

2♣ - 2♦ (waiting)

3♦ - 3N

?

and allowing an auction like

2♣ - 2♦

3♦ - 3♥

3♠ - 4♠

Would limit the partnership's opportunity to find 5-3 ♥ fits in this situation without considerable risk. In general, 2♣ should be opened with very strong one suited hands, and occasionally some 5-5+ combinations. The 4-6 hands are awkward to find the right suit consistently.

Can Responder Make a Game Forcing Jump Shift?

By specific agreement, yes. There are two common situations where this is a possible agreement:

- As an initial response

This is an outdated treatment with the advent of 2/1 game forcing and several conventions available after a minor suit opening. However, the “classic” treatment for an auction like

1♣ - 2♠ is a 6+ card suit with game forcing values.

- As a rebid

Again, this treatment is outdated due to the concept of 4th suit forcing, but the traditional meaning of responder’s jump-shift rebid in a new suit was natural and game forcing. So by agreement,

1♣ - 1♠
2♣ - 3♦ would show 5+♠ 4+♦ or 4♠ 5+♦ and game forcing values.

1♦ - 1♠
2♣ - 3♥ would show 5+♠ 4+♥ and game forcing values.

In similar times, any jump rebid was considered game forcing – but then bridge players figured out that there was no great way to invite to game AND bid partscores effectively. This sequence (and similar)

1♥ - 1♠
2♣ - 3♥ used to be game forcing, but is now played as invitational.