

Thought Process for Opener's Response

Partner Opens 1♠, and You Have...

12+ HCP (i.e. force to game)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• With four trumps, bid 2N (Jacoby)• Otherwise, make a 2/1 (see next chart below)
5-8 HCP, 6-7cd suit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jump shift in that suit (3♣/♦/♥)
Other <12 HCP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respond 1N (remember this is forcing)

Making a 2/1 Game Forcing Response: Which Suit Do I Bid?

5+♥	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bid 2♥• Otherwise continue
< 5♥	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bid the longer minor (2♣/♦)• If minors are = length, continue
< 5♥, = minor lengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bid 2♦ with 5♦ 5♣• Otherwise bid 2♣

If You're Not Convinced Why Responder's Rules Are So...

The auction in bridge is really a game in itself. The goal is to get to the contract that scores the highest the most often. In a 2/1 game forcing auction, the partnership will know to bid some kind of game/slam contract. So, it's really just a matter of determining the best trump fit(s).

In order to do this, a pair (let's call the players North and South) bidding two hands must find a way to find any 8-card fit. In particular, it is highly advantageous to bid game contracts in the major suits and NT (these require only 10 and 9 tricks respectively).

With this in mind, an 8-card fit can be distributed 4-4, (5-3), (6-2), (7-1), and (8-0). North and South need to identify these fits in the majors as soon as possible, and look for notrump otherwise. The following discussion will elaborate the logic behind the rules described above.

Consider these two hands:

North: ♠AKJxx ♥KJxx ♦xxx ♣x

South: ♠xx Axxxx AKJ xx

North opens 1♠, and South must consider what to respond. Showing the ♥ suit looks right instinctively, since South cannot tell if North has 6♠s. ♥s would be the next best option as a trump suit – it's the longest suit, but it's also a major suit.

If South had ♠xx ♥Axxx ♦AKJx ♣xx, 2♥ looks right by the same principle. The trouble with this isn't clear until the bid is seen from opener's side. If the two hands were

North: ♠AKJxx ♥KJx ♦xxx ♣x

South: ♠xx ♥Axxx ♦AKJx ♣xx

North would open 1♠, and if South bids 2♥, North doesn't know whether South has 4♥ or 5. North also cannot assuredly rebid NT without South confirming values in both minor suits.

With this problem clear, one solution would be to have North rebid 3♦ (awful as it looks), and South would bid ♥s again to confirm a 5-card suit. This would work well on this set of hands...

... but it creates problems when South has 6♥s. Consider this set of hands under the "rebid with 5" solution:

North: ♠AKJxx ♥Tx ♦xx ♣KJxx

South: ♠xx ♥AKJxxx ♦KQx ♣xx

North opens 1♠, and South responds 2♥s. North bids 3♣ (he cannot support ♥s, doesn't have extra ♠ length, and has ♦s unstopped), and South rebids 3♥s. North cannot bid 4♥ because South is only promising 5. Similarly, when North bids, say, 3♠ (3N would be fine for the sake of discussion as well), South cannot bid 4♥ because North may have 0 or 1♥!

This example highlights the need for South to be able to show 6-card suits by the time he reaches the three level. However, with only two bids to show ♥s directly, South cannot distinguish between all three lengths. What should South do about this unavoidable ambiguity?

Since not all ♥ lengths can be shown immediately through an initial ♥ response, the next best thing to do is have some ♥ suits be shown later after a different initial response! In other words, South should make some other call with one of the ♥ lengths (either 4, 5, or 6 cards). The question, then, is which length should South not show immediately?

It looks intuitive to delay showing a 4-card ♥ suit. This keeps the initial 2♥ response tied to at least a 5-card suit. Responder can always rebid 3♥ with a 6-card suit. In this scheme, opener is now obligated to show 4♥ so South can raise when he has 4 (but he'll never have more than 4). In this way, North/South can get to all 4-4, 5-3, and 6-2 major suit fits.

Some hands to illustrate this conclusion:

	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>	
♠AKJxx ♥KJx ♦xxx ♣xx	1♠	2♥	
♠xx ♥Axxxx ♦KQx ♣Axx	3♥	...	The fit is found, and game can be bid at any time
♠AKJxx ♥KJ ♦xx ♣xxxx	1♠	2♥	
♠xx ♥Axxxxx ♦KQx ♣Ax	3♣	3♥	
	4♥		The 3♥ rebid showed a 6-card suit, and North is happy to raise to game.
♠AKJxx ♥KJxx ♦xx ♣xx	1♠	2♣	
♠xx ♥Axxx ♦Axx ♣KQxx	2♥	3♥	
	...		South starts by showing his longest minor. North is obligated to show a 4-card ♥ suit if he has one. South raises, signifying the fit is found.

This methodology is the foundation of 2/1 bidding. It should be noticed that the 7-1 and 8-0 distributions were not discussed. This is because one person will always know which game to bid looking at an 8-card trump suit. As for 7 card suit, experience and statistics suggest that this will normally have to be backed into as a trump suit given the number of rebids necessary to show it. Plus, playing in this suit would also imply there was no other 8-card fit elsewhere. In other words, 7-1 fits can be disregarded.

It is worth pointing out that 5-card major openings were developed from this same thought process. The reader is encouraged to ponder this. Understanding this thinking will help improve bidding judgment and memory retention.