

THE GOLDEN RULE OF BIDDING

When a new suit is non-forcing

Whilst we are used to the idea of an OLD suit (one that has been bid previously in the auction) being non-forcing, there are certain situations when the bid of a NEW suit can also be non-forcing.

NON-FORCING NEW SUITS

Opener	Responder
1♠	1NT (6-9)
2♣	2♦

The 2♦ bid is an example of a NEW suit being non-forcing. How do we recognize it? The bidder is limited due to their 1NT response (6-9). Any change of suit from them would be non-forcing.

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
1NT	2♥ (6-9)

In the above example, responder has options. They could choose checkback or they may jump to the 3-level. As they didn't do either, this NEW suit is non-forcing.

FORCING NEW SUITS

Excluding the above examples, as a general rule, NEW suits by responder are forcing.

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
2♣	2♦ (F1)

This change of suit by responder is forcing for one round and cannot be passed as they are unlimited. Opener is expected to continue to describe their hand.

PASSING OPENER'S NEW SUIT

Whilst opener's change of suit is generally forcing, there are moments when responder can use their better judgement and pass. This may turn out to be a disaster when the opener turns out to have a very strong hand which is why responder should only pass with a very minimum hand (up to 7 HCP maximum).

West	East	West	East
♠ A5	♠ KJ43	1♥	1♠
♥ AQ743	♥ 2	2♣	No
♦ 94	♦ J8732		
♣ KJ93	♣ Q82		

With only 7 HCP and a singleton in partner 1st bid suit, responder is too weak for 2NT (10-12) and 2♦ would be 4th suit forcing (12+). The best bid for responder here is pass.

West	East	West	East
♠ A5	♠ KJ43	1♥	1♠
♥ AKJ743	♥ 62	2♣	2♥
♦ 9	♦ J872	4♥	
♣ KJ103	♣ Q82		

With doubleton support in opener's 1st bid suit, responder should revert back to that suit rather than pass. This may also help to find game if opener has a better hand with a 6-card major.

WHEN PARTNER OVER CALLS

Because over calls at the 1-level can be wide ranging, it's important to have flexibility for the advancer. Changes of suit at the 1-level or the 2-level can be used as non-forcing.

	West	North	East	South
♠ J ♥ 9 4 3 ♦ K Q 10 6 3 2 ♣ A 3 2		1♥	1♠	No
	?			

As partner's 1♠ over call could be anywhere from 7-17 HCP, you would like to play in only 2♦ if partner was in the 7-11 HCP range. An acceptable method is to play the 2♦ bid as non-forcing unless partner has an opening hand for their 1-level over call.

ON THE 2ND ROUND WHEN BOTH OPPONENTS ARE BIDDING

Fighting for the part score can be a vital part of competitive bidding. Utilising double when the last bid is made by your right-hand opponent and bids as non-forcing and limited is a worthwhile method to consider.

	West	North	East	South
♠ 2 ♥ 4 3 ♦ A K 9 6 4 ♣ K Q J 10 3	1♦	1♠	Dbl	2♠
	?			

The method I suggest to adopt here is to play all bids as non-forcing and double as 16+. For responder the range would be 10+ for double on the 2nd round.

On the hand in question, West bids 3♣. Despite this being a NEW suit, the bid is non-forcing as double would show 16+ HCP.

1.	North	Dir: N
	♠ AJ983	Vul: EW
	♥ Q	
	♦ K82	
	♣ KJ92	
	West	East
	♠ Q65	♠ K1072
	♥ 10865	♥ A3
	♦ A106	♦ J954
	♣ Q83	♣ A76
	South	
	♠ 4	
	♥ KJ9742	
	♦ Q73	
	♣ 1054	

North	East	South	West
1♠	No	1NT	No
2♣	No	2♥	No
No	No		

Bidding: Despite South's change of suit, 2♥ is non-forcing as South is already limited by their 1NT response (6-9). Despite holding a singleton, North should play South for a 6-card suit and choose the 6-1 fit.

Play: Lead – ♠5. Declarer wins the ♠A and immediately plays a trump. East wins and switches to the ♦4. When dummy plays low, West inserts the ♦10 and North wins. Declarer ruffs a heart to hand, draws 2 rounds of trumps and leads the ♣10. East wins the ♣A and plays the ♦J to score 2 tricks. Making 8.

2.	North	Dir: N
	♠ Q4	Vul: All
	♥ A1093	
	♦ KQ53	
	♣ Q74	
	West	East
	♠ J1098	♠ A5
	♥ K82	♥ 76
	♦ J6	♦ A1082
	♣ A1096	♣ KJ853
	South	
	♠ K7632	
	♥ QJ54	
	♦ 974	
	♣ 2	

North	East	South	West
1♦	No	1♠	No
1NT	No	2♥	No
No	No		

Bidding: As North has rebid 1NT, any bid by responder at the 2-level, other than checkback, is non-forcing.

Play: Lead: ♣A. West wins the ♣A and switches to a trump. Declarer takes the finesse winning with the ♥J in hand. Next play is a low spade. East takes dummy's ♠Q and plays a 2nd trump, West withholding the ♥K. Declarer should aim to take the next 4 tricks via a cross ruff.

3.

	North	Dir: S
♠	KJ62	Vul: All
♥	4	
♦	J9642	
♣	Q73	
	West	East
♠	1094	♠ Q873
♥	J1092	♥ K86
♦	K105	♦ AQ7
♣	A104	♣ 986
	South	
♠	A5	
♥	AQ753	
♦	83	
♣	KJ52	

North	East	South	West
		1♥	No
1♠	No	2♣	No
No	No		

Bidding: With a less than 8 HCP, a singleton in opener's major and limited options, North should choose to pass.

Play: Lead – ♣4. Automatic trump lead on this auction. Declarer wins with dummy's ♣Q and immediately leads a heart to the queen. When this wins, declarer cashes the ♥A, trumps a heart in dummy and plays a 3 rounds of spades trumping in hand.

4.

	North	Dir: S
♠	KJ43	Vul: All
♥	62	
♦	J872	
♣	Q82	
	West	East
♠	1097	♠ Q862
♥	Q	♥ 10984
♦	KQ54	♦ A1063
♣	97654	♣ A
	South	
♠	A5	
♥	AKJ753	
♦	9	
♣	KJ103	

North	East	South	West
		1♥	No
1♠	No	2♣	No
2♥	No	4♥	All Pass

Bidding: With a doubleton heart, North should give false preference back to hearts. This improves South's hand and they have an easy 4♥ bid.

Play: Lead – DK. East encourages the lead and declarer trumps in on the 2nd round. Declarer should now cash the HA. When the ♥Q drops declarer is held to one trump loser. If declarer had crossed to dummy to take a 1st round heart finesse, they would lose two trump tricks.