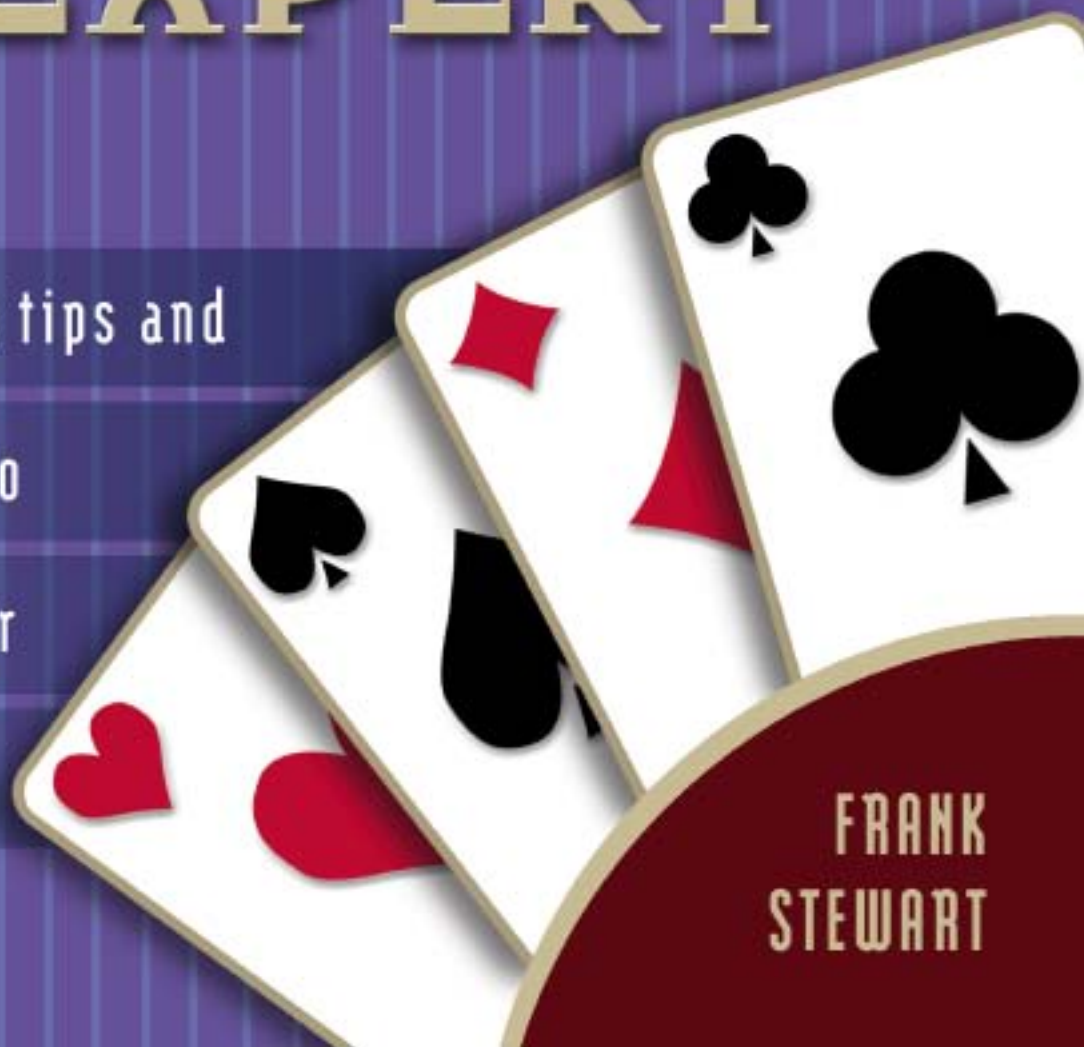


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# BRIDGE EXPERT

Sure-fire tips and  
secrets to  
boost your  
scores



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# BECOMING



# BRIDGE EXPERT

FRANK STEWART



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# DEDICATION

My father, Dr. Frank R. Stewart (1910-1964), served as a teacher, a coach, a high school principal, a county Superintendent of Education, Alabama's State Superintendent and a college president. He was a genial man who could interact with people better than anyone I ever knew, and his life was devoted to the cause of educating children. I dedicate this book to his memory.



---

# FOREWORD

I was a professional player and, I thought, a rather better teacher when I began to write articles and books on bridge. In 1984 I became a co-editor of the ACBL's magazine, and I retired from competition and never un-retired; I found pounding away at a word processor easier and more rewarding than coping with a partner and two opponents. If you think this makes me a questionable counselor, I can't blame you. But in my twenty years as an author, editor, analyst and syndicated columnist, I've had plenty of chances to observe what factors make a winning player. A solid foundation, partnership trust, discipline, focus and judgment will make a winner of anyone, and those are the themes in this book. *Becoming a Bridge Expert* contains four main sections: constructive bidding, dummy play, competitive bidding and defense. Each section has fifteen tips, and most begin with a problem, proceed to illustrative deals and end with a problem so you can see if you have the idea. Assume IMP scoring (like party bridge or Chicago) unless otherwise shown. A fifth section deals with the more personal aspects of the game.

I hope you enjoy it all. May all your finesses be winners!

*Frank Stewart  
Fayette, AL  
August, 2000*

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Portions of the material originally appeared in the *OKbridge Spectator*, the *American Contract Bridge League Bulletin* and *The Bridge World* and are used with the kind permission of those publications. A few deals and their commentary are adapted from my earlier book *The Bidder's Bible* or from *Daily Bridge Club*, my syndicated column. *The Bridge World* and the ACBL's *World Championship* books were sources of some deals.

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# CONSTRUCTIVE BIDDING

## II

**Constructive** bidding is bidding with no interference. The term also describes a bid that is encouraging or suggests more values than one might expect. In Standard methods, for instance, a single raise promises six to nine points, but in some styles, ‘constructive’ single raises promise more.

When I teach intermediate players, I stress the importance of a solid bidding foundation. If a player never errs in a textbook sequence, he’ll have an edge over 95% of his competitors; and the best part of an expert’s game is that he never fouls up a basic auction. Hence, my first tip ...



## KNOW YOUR BASICS COLD

Here's a multiple-choice quiz. For each sequence, pick the hand East is most likely to hold using Standard bidding methods. Each answer appears under the problem — cover the page so you won't peek.

	WEST	EAST
①	2♦	1♠
	2NT	2♠
		3♥
a)	♠ A Q 9 7 4 3 ♥ A J 10 4 ♦ J 4 ♣ 3	b) ♠ A Q 7 6 4 3 ♥ A J 6 4 2 ♦ J ♣ 3
c)	♠ A J 8 7 6 ♥ A K Q ♦ J 2 ♣ 4 3 2	d) ♠ A Q 7 6 5 4 ♥ A K 4 3 ♦ K 3 ♣ 3

Since East's sequence suggests six spades, four hearts and minimum values, (a) is correct. Hand (b) would rebid 2♥; hand (c) would raise 2NT to 3NT; hand (d) would bid spades-hearts-spades, showing 6-4 in the majors with extra strength.

	WEST	EAST
②	1♥	1♠
	2♣	2♥
a)	♠ A 6 5 4 ♥ K 5 4 ♦ 5 4 3 2 ♣ 7 5	b) ♠ A 7 6 5 3 ♥ K Q ♦ 4 3 2 ♣ Q 4 3
c)	♠ A 6 5 4 ♥ K J 3 ♦ 4 3 2 ♣ Q 4 3	d) ♠ A 7 6 5 4 ♥ Q 3 ♦ 6 5 4 3 ♣ Q 4

Hand (a), which is worth only one bid, would raise 1♥ to 2♥ at its first turn; hands (b) and (c) are too strong for a cheap preference — either hand might jump to 3♥ over 2♣. Hand (d) is correct: East will have only two hearts on this bidding.

	WEST	EAST
③	2♦	1♠
	2NT	2♥
		3♠
a)	♠ A Q 9 7 4 3 ♥ A J 10 4 ♦ J 4 ♣ 3	b) ♠ A Q 7 6 4 3 ♥ A J 6 4 2 ♦ J ♣ 3
c)	♠ A Q 8 7 6 ♥ A K 4 3 ♦ Q 2 ♣ 4 3	d) ♠ A Q 7 6 5 4 ♥ A K 4 3 ♦ K 3 ♣ 3

Hand (d) is correct. Hand (a) would bid spades-spades-hearts; hand (b) would bid 3♥ or 4♥ over 2NT; hand (c) would raise 2NT to 3NT.

	WEST	EAST					
4	1♠	2♦					
	2♠	2NT					
	3♥	3♠					
a)	♠ Q 5 3 ♥ 10 4 3 ♦ A J 6 5 ♣ A 10 4	b)	♠ Q 3 ♥ K 7 6 ♦ Q J 6 5 4 ♣ K 4 3	c)	♠ Q 6 ♥ A J 5 ♦ Q 9 7 4 3 ♣ A 10 4	d)	♠ Q 5 ♥ A J 3 ♦ A 7 6 5 4 ♣ 6 5 4

Hand (b) is correct. Hand (a) would raise 2♠ to 3♠; hand (c) would jump to 3NT over 2♠; hand (d), with all working cards, would jump to 4♠ over 3♥.

	WEST	EAST					
5	1♠	2♣					
	2♥	4♠					
a)	♠ K 7 6 ♥ 7 6 ♦ A Q 6 ♣ A J 4 3 2	b)	♠ K 7 6 ♥ K 7 ♦ A J 4 ♣ A J 4 3 2	c)	♠ Q 6 5 4 ♥ 6 5 ♦ A 5 ♣ A J 5 4 3	d)	♠ K Q 4 3 ♥ 4 3 ♦ 5 4 ♣ A K Q 4 3

Hand (d) is correct: this sequence suggests strong spades, strong clubs and slam interest. Hands (a) and (b) would jump to 3♠ (forcing) over 2♥; hand (c) would do likewise but might just raise spades without introducing the clubs.

	WEST	EAST					
6	1♥	1NT					
	2♣	2♠					
a)	♠ 9 8 7 6 5 3 ♥ 5 ♦ J 6 5 ♣ A Q 3	b)	♠ A K Q ♥ 5 4 ♦ J 6 5 4 ♣ 10 5 4 3	c)	♠ A K 2 ♥ 3 ♦ 8 7 5 ♣ Q 8 7 6 5 3	d)	♠ A 7 ♥ 4 3 ♦ J 8 6 5 ♣ K 9 6 5 2

Hand (c) is correct: the 2♠ bid shows spade values in a hand greatly improved by West's 2♣ rebid. Hand (a) would respond 1♠ over 1♥. Hand (b) would raise 2♣ to 3♣ or try 2NT; hand (d) would raise 2♣ to 3♣.

	WEST	EAST
7	1♠	1♣
		2♥
a)	♠ 5 4 ♥ A K 4 3 ♦ J 5 4 ♣ A Q 5 4	b) ♠ 6 ♥ Q 6 5 4 3 ♦ A 4 ♣ A K Q 5 4
c)	♠ A J ♥ A Q 5 4 ♦ 5 4 ♣ A K J 6 5	d) ♠ J 7 ♥ A K 5 4 ♦ K 4 3 ♣ A K J 5

Hand (c) is correct: East has reversed and promises great strength and longer clubs than hearts. Hand (a) would rebid 1NT; hand (b) would open 1♥; hand (d) would jump to 2NT over 1♠.

	WEST	EAST
8	2♣	1♥
	2NT	2♦
		3♣
a)	♠ — ♥ A K 7 6 5 ♦ A 7 6 5 ♣ J 6 5 4	b) ♠ 6 ♥ A K 7 6 5 ♦ A 7 6 5 ♣ J 5 4
c)	♠ 7 ♥ A Q 7 6 5 ♦ A J 7 6 ♣ K Q 5	d) ♠ — ♥ A K 7 6 5 ♦ Q J 9 7 6 ♣ A J 6

Hand (b) is correct; this sequence should show a minimum hand that prefers not to play in notrump. Hand (a) would raise 2♣ to 3♣; hand (c) would jump to 4♣ over 2NT; example (d) is a hard hand to describe but might jump to 4♣ or 4♦ over 2NT.

These answers reflect my opinion, but many experts would bid as East did with hands (c) and (d) and perhaps even with (a), since they would treat East's sequence — a change of suit followed by a bid supporting partner — as strong and forcing. Presumably, they'd raise 2♣ to 3♣ or pass 2NT with (b). But without the change of suit, for example in this auction:

	WEST	EAST
		1♥
	2♣	2♥
	2NT	3♣

in which East limited his strength with the 2♥ rebid, his 3♣ would certainly not be forcing. Discuss both sequences with your regular partner.

	WEST	EAST
9		1♠
	1NT	2♦
	3♦	3♥
a)	♠ A Q 8 6 5 ♥ A 7 6 5 ♦ A J 5 4 ♣ —	b) ♠ A Q 6 5 4 ♥ A Q 5 ♦ K J 5 4 ♣ 5
c)	♠ A Q 6 5 4 ♥ A J 6 ♦ A K 5 4 ♣ 3	d) ♠ A K 6 5 4 2 ♥ A J 6 ♦ K J 4 3 ♣ —

Hand (b) is correct: East has enough strength to move toward game, and 3♥ is his most descriptive bid. Hand (a) would rebid 2♥ over 1NT; hand (c) would jump shift to 3♦ over 1NT; hand (d) would bid 3♠, forcing, over 3♦.

	WEST	EAST
10	1♥	1♠
	1NT	2♥
	a) ♠ A 7 6 5 4 ♥ K Q ♦ 6 5 4 ♣ 5 4 3	b) ♠ A 7 6 5 4 ♥ Q J 5 ♦ 5 4 ♣ 5 4 3
c)	♠ A 9 6 4 3 ♥ A Q 4 ♦ 4 3 ♣ 5 4 3	d) ♠ A 9 6 5 3 ♥ K J ♦ K 5 4 ♣ 5 4 3

Hand (c) is correct. With heart support and a weak hand, East would have raised to 2♥ right away. Here he promises about ten points with real heart support. Hand (a) would pass 1NT; hand (b) would raise 1♥ to 2♥ initially; hand (d) would raise 1NT to 2NT.

	WEST	EAST
11	1♠	2♦
	2♠	3♣
	3♦	3♠
a)	♠ Q 6 5 ♥ 5 4 ♦ A J 4 3 ♣ K J 4 3	b) ♠ Q 5 ♥ 8 7 ♦ Q 8 7 6 3 ♣ A K 5 4
c)	♠ Q 6 5 ♥ 7 ♦ A Q 6 5 4 ♣ A K 6 5	d) ♠ Q 5 ♥ 7 6 ♦ A K 5 4 3 ♣ A J 5 4

Hand (d) is correct: East's sequence is forcing. Hand (a) would raise 2♠ to 3♠; hand (b) can't force to game and would probably risk raising 2♠ to 3♠; hand (c) would jump to 4♠ over 3♦.

	WEST	EAST					
12	1♠	2♦					
	2♥	3♣					
	3NT	4♠					
a)	♠ K 6 5 ♥ 4 ♦ A J 5 4 3 ♣ K J 5 4	b)	♠ K 7 6 ♥ 6 5 ♦ A Q 7 6 ♣ A K 5 4	c)	♠ Q 6 5 ♥ — ♦ A Q 7 6 5 4 ♣ K 4 3 2	d)	♠ K J 5 ♥ 5 ♦ A Q 5 4 3 ♣ A J 5 4

Hand (d) is correct: East's sequence shows slam interest with good spade support and a singleton heart. If West has 'working' honors such as the ♦K, ♥A and good trumps, he should move toward slam. Hands (a) and (b) would jump to 3♠ (forcing) over 2♥, and (c) might also.

	WEST	EAST					
13	1♥	1♦					
	1NT	1♠					
		2♥					
a)	♠ A 7 6 5 ♥ J 7 6 5 ♦ A K 5 4 ♣ 3	b)	♠ A 7 6 5 ♥ K 6 5 ♦ A Q 5 4 ♣ 6 5	c)	♠ A 7 6 5 ♥ K 7 6 ♦ A K 6 5 ♣ Q 6	d)	♠ A 9 6 5 ♥ Q 7 6 ♦ A K J 7 6 ♣ 4

Hand (a) would raise 1♥ to 2♥; hand (b) can't bid a third time and would pass 1NT; hand (c) would open 1NT. Hand (d) is correct: East must have better than minimum values to bid again when West suggests weakness.

If East has

♠ J 5 4 3 ♥ K J 4 ♦ A K 5 4 3 ♣ 5

I believe he should let the spades go and raise 1♥ to 2♥. The direct raise is also barely possible on (b), but this is not as good a hand for hearts, so opener has more reason to look for alternative strains.

	WEST	EAST					
14	1♥	1NT					
	2♥	2♠					
a)	♠ 9 8 7 6 5 ♥ 3 ♦ A 6 5 4 ♣ Q 4 2	b)	♠ A K 4 ♥ K 6 ♦ 7 6 5 4 ♣ 6 5 4 3	c)	♠ A 6 ♥ — ♦ J 10 7 6 4 ♣ Q 9 7 6 5 4	d)	♠ 8 7 6 5 ♥ — ♦ K 9 7 6 4 ♣ K 8 7 5

This is a tricky one. Hands (a) and (d) would respond 1♠ over 1♥; hand (b) would raise 2♥ to 3♥ or try 2NT. Hand (c) is correct: East's odd sequence says, "Pick a minor."

	WEST	EAST
15	1♥	1♣
	2♣	1♠
		2♥
a)	♠ A Q 6 5 ♥ Q 4 ♦ 6 5 ♣ A K Q 7 6	b) ♠ A 7 6 5 ♥ J 6 5 ♦ 6 5 ♣ A K J 5
c)	♠ A K 6 5 ♥ Q 7 6 ♦ 7 ♣ A Q J 7 6	d) ♠ A J 6 5 ♥ K 7 6 ♦ 6 5 ♣ A K J 6

Hand (c) is correct; again, once West's 2♣ preference shows weakness, East needs a good hand to bid again and suggest game. Hand (a) would bid 3♣ over 2♣. Hand (b) would pass 2♣; hand (d) would open 1NT.

	WEST	EAST		
16	1♥	pass		
		2♠		
	a)	b)	c)	d)
	♠ K J 10 7 6 5 ♥ 4 ♦ 6 5 4 ♣ 8 5 3	♠ A K J 8 7 ♥ A 6 ♦ 7 6 4 ♣ 10 6 5	♠ K Q 10 8 7 ♥ 8 7 ♦ A 6 5 ♣ Q 8 7	♠ A Q 6 5 4 ♥ K J 7 6 ♦ 6 5 ♣ 6 5

Hand (d) is correct: West's opening bid has improved East's hand. The jump shift by a passed hand promises a fit and is forcing (see Tip 9 in this section). Hand (a) would bid 2♠ only if using weak jump shifts; hand (b) would have opened the bidding; hand (c) would respond only 1♠ — it's a good hand, but no better than it was.

	WEST	EAST		
17	3♥	1NT		
		4♦		
	a)	b)	c)	d)
	♠ 7 6 5 ♥ K 6 5 ♦ A K Q 6 5 ♣ K J	♠ A 7 6 ♥ 7 6 ♦ A K Q 9 7 ♣ K 7 6	♠ A 5 ♥ 7 6 ♦ K Q J 7 6 5 ♣ A Q 7	♠ A 5 ♥ A Q 7 6 ♦ A K 6 5 ♣ 8 7 5

Hand (d) is correct: the advance cuebid promises maximum strength, super heart support and diamond values. Hand (a) would just raise 3♥ to 4♥; hand (b) would bid 3NT over 3♥; hand (c) would open 1♦ (I hope).



	WEST	EAST
18	1♠	3♣
	3♠	4♥
a)	♠ K ♥ A K 6 5 ♦ 7 6 ♣ A K J 7 6 5	b) ♠ A 6 ♥ A K 4 ♦ 6 5 ♣ A Q 8 6 5 4
c)	♠ K 6 ♥ A 6 5 ♦ K 5 4 ♣ A K J 6 5	d) ♠ K Q 4 ♥ A 5 ♦ 6 5 ♣ A K J 6 5 4

Experts avoid using a jump shift unless they know which suit will be trumps; otherwise, they need room to find a trump suit. Hands (a) and (b) would therefore start by responding 2♣; hand (c) would respond 3♣ but would rebid 3NT over 3♠. Hand (d) is correct; if West bids 4♠ next, East will raise to 5♠, asking him to bid a slam with a diamond control.

	WEST	EAST
19	1♠	1♦
	3♦ <sup>1</sup>	2♣ 3♠
1. Invitational.		
a)	♠ Q J 5 ♥ 4 ♦ A 7 6 5 4 ♣ A J 5 4	b) ♠ J 5 4 ♥ 6 ♦ A K 8 7 6 ♣ A K 7 6
c)	♠ Q 4 ♥ 6 5 ♦ A K 5 4 3 ♣ A Q 5 4	d) ♠ K Q 3 ♥ 5 ♦ A 6 5 4 3 ♣ A Q 5 4

Hand (b) is correct. Hand (a) should raise 1♠ to 2♠; even though West has only three trumps, he should limit his minimum hand quickly. Hand (c) would bid 4♦ or even 5♦ over 3♦; hand (d) would jump to 4♠ over 3♦, suggesting three strong spades.

	WEST	EAST
20	1♥	1♦
	2NT	2♣ 3♠
a)	♠ A 9 6 ♥ 5 ♦ A Q J 6 3 ♣ A 10 6 5	b) ♠ A 4 ♥ 7 ♦ K Q 6 5 4 ♣ K J 10 7 6
c)	♠ A 6 ♥ 7 ♦ A K 6 5 4 ♣ K Q 10 5 4	d) ♠ 10 7 6 3 ♥ — ♦ A K 5 4 2 ♣ A K 5 4

East cannot have 'real' spades, as in hand (d) — he would have rebid 1♠ over 1♥. Hand (c) is correct: East is showing a strong minor two-suiter and suggesting that slam is possible. With a less distributional hand, like (a), he would raise 2NT to 3NT; with a weaker hand, like (b), he would sign off in 3♣ over 2NT;

	WEST	EAST
21		1♦
	1♠	2♣
	2♥	2♠
	a) ♠ K J 5 ♥ 6 ♦ A J 10 4 3 ♣ K 5 4 3	b) ♠ Q 4 ♥ K 4 ♦ A Q 10 4 3 ♣ A 10 5 4
	d) ♠ K J 2 ♥ 5 ♦ A Q 7 6 5 ♣ A Q 5 4	

Hand (c) is correct. Hand (a) would raise 1♠ to 2♠; hand (b) would bid 2NT over 2♥; hand (d) would jump to 3♠ over 2♥.

	WEST	EAST	
22		1♦	
	1♠	3♠	
	a) ♠ K Q 4 ♥ A Q 3 ♦ A K 5 4 3 ♣ 4 3	b) ♠ K J 5 4 ♥ A 5 ♦ A K J 6 ♣ 6 5 4	c) ♠ K J 5 4 ♥ A 5 ♦ A K J 5 4 ♣ 5 4
		d) ♠ A Q 6 5 ♥ 6 ♦ A K J 5 4 ♣ A 6 5	

Hand (c) is correct: East's sequence denies balanced distribution. Hand (a) has only three spades so would improvise with a reverse to 2♥ over 1♠, intending to support spades next; hand (b) would open 1NT; hand (d) is too strong for 3♠ and would try 3♣ or 4♥ (splinter).

	WEST	EAST
23		1♦
	1♠	2NT
	3♥	4♠
	a) ♠ K Q ♥ A Q ♦ A Q 9 7 6 ♣ Q 9 6 2	b) ♠ 10 7 6 5 ♥ A Q 3 ♦ A K 5 4 ♣ A Q
	d) ♠ J 7 6 ♥ A K ♦ A Q 5 4 3 ♣ K Q 5	

Hand (a) would bid 3NT over 3♥ and might rebid 2♣ or 3♣ instead of 2NT. On (b) most experts would raise 1♠ directly to 4♠; some would try 2NT first given the poor trumps, but might then bid 3♠ over 3♥. Hand (d) would bid only 3♠ over 3♥. Hand (c) is correct because East's jump suggests strong spades. Principle: *a player who jumps when he doesn't need to has strength in the suit he jumps in.*

Players who adhere to the Principle of Fast Arrival believe that a 4♠ bid here shows no interest in any other contract. Since the auction will usually end at 4♠ anyway, bidding it directly suggests a less promising hand than does a slower approach. My book *The Bidder's*

*Bible* includes a discussion of Fast Arrival. It is a flawed concept in several ways, but to justify a jump to 4♠ on this auction, opener must be sure spades is the best strain (and not notrump, say). Also, if slam is in the picture, trump quality is a vital factor, and opener must reassure responder that trump quality is not a deterrent.

If this kind of jump is played, as it should be, to show strength in a suit, then on an auction such as

WEST	EAST
	1♦
1♥	1♠
2♣	2♦
3♠	

West has a singleton diamond and good spades. On this next auction he has shown good clubs:

WEST	EAST
	1♦
1♥	1♠
3♣	3♦
3♠	

WEST	EAST
	1♥
1♠	2♠
2NT	3♥

24

- a) ♠ J 5 4      b) ♠ J 7 6 5      c) ♠ K J 5      d) ♠ K J 5  
 ♥ A K 6 5 4      ♥ A K 6 5 4      ♥ A J 10 6 5 4      ♥ A K 10 9 6 5  
 ♦ 7 6      ♦ 5 4      ♦ 5 4      ♦ K 5  
 ♣ A J 6      ♣ A 4      ♣ A 4      ♣ 6 5

Hand (c) is correct: East shows three spades, six hearts and minimum values. Hand (a) might raise to 2♠ but would just pass 2NT; hand (b) would bid 3♠ or 4♠ over 2NT; hand (d) would jump to 4♥ over 2NT.

WEST	EAST
	1♣
1♦	1♥
2♣	2NT

25

- a) ♠ A Q 3      b) ♠ A 5 4      c) ♠ Q 4 3      d) ♠ A Q  
 ♥ J 5 4 3      ♥ K 5 4 3      ♥ Q 5 4 3      ♥ Q 10 6 5  
 ♦ 5 4 3      ♦ 6      ♦ A 7      ♦ A 10  
 ♣ A K 2      ♣ A K Q 5 4      ♣ A K J 4      ♣ A J 5 4 3

Hand (d) is correct. Hand (a) would pass 2♣. Hand (b) would

try for game despite West's weak preference but wouldn't be eager to bid notrump; East would try 3♣ or 2♠. Hand (c) would open 1NT, of course.

The record of major championships is full of disasters caused by a difference of opinion over whether or not a bid was forcing. The deal below, from a U.S. Trials, was reported in *The Bridge World*.

**Dlr: South**  
**Vul: None**

♠ K J 10 8 6 2 ♥ Q 8 7 6 ♦ K 7 4 ♣ —	♠ Q 4 ♥ K J 10 4 ♦ Q 8 2 ♣ K J 8 7  <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 30px; margin: 0 auto; text-align: center;">                     N                      W   S   E                 </div>	♠ 7 ♥ 9 3 2 ♦ J 10 9 6 5 3 ♣ Q 6 2  ♠ A 9 5 3 ♥ A 5 ♦ A ♣ A 10 9 5 4 3
---	--	--

At one table North-South overreached to 7♣. After the ♠J opening lead, South could have succeeded but didn't. (A complex squeeze would make the grand slam on any lead.) In the replay:

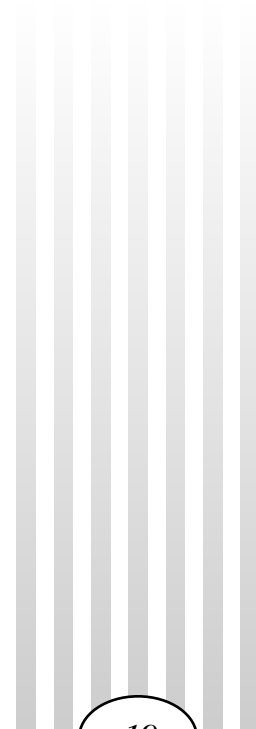
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♠	3♠	pass	1♣
all pass			4♣

North-South weren't using negative doubles, so North started with a cuebid, angling for notrump. When South rebid 4♣ — he was setting the trump suit before cuebidding — North passed with his junky hand.

It's unclear to what level North's 3♠ cuebid should be forcing (to game, or just to 4♣), but if practiced expert partnerships can have such misunderstandings, it's no wonder that casual partnerships have them. The more time a partnership devotes to defining auctions, the better its results will be. Here are twenty-five bidding sequences; decide whether or not the last bid is forcing. I'll tell you how I think it should be played, but the answer isn't always clear-cut. In the end, the only 'correct' answers are the ones on which you and your partner agree.



## IS IT FORCING?



	WEST	EAST
①	1♣ 1♠	1♥

	WEST	EAST
②	1♦ 2♣ 3♦	1♠ 2♠

	WEST	EAST
③	1♦ 1♠	1♥ 3♦

	WEST	EAST
④	1♦ 1♠ 2♥	1♥ 2♣ <sup>1</sup> 3♦
	1.	Fourth-suit forcing.

	WEST	EAST
⑤	1♦ 1♠ 2♦	1♥ 2♣ <sup>1</sup> 3♦
	1.	Fourth-suit forcing.

	WEST	EAST
⑥	1♦ 1♠	1♥ 3♥

	WEST	EAST
⑦	1♦ 1♠	1♥ 2NT

	WEST	EAST
⑧	1♦ 2♠	1♠ 3♦

	WEST	EAST
⑨	1♥ 2♣	1♠ 3♥

	WEST	EAST
⑩	2♣ 2♥ 3♥	2♦ 3♣ <sup>1</sup>
	1.	Second negative.

To Preferences 8 - 19

	WEST	EAST
11	1♥ 2♠	2♥ 3♣

	WEST	EAST
12	1♣ 2♣ 2NT	1♠ 2♦ 3♣

	WEST	EAST
13	1♥ 3♣	2♣

	WEST	EAST
14	1♠ 2♠	2♣

	WEST	EAST
15	1♥ 2♥ 2NT	2♣ 2♠ 3♣

	WEST	EAST
16	pass 2NT	1♦ 3♦

	WEST	EAST
17	1♦ 2♥ 4♦	1♠ 3♦

	WEST	EAST
18	1♣ 3♣	1♠ 4♣

	WEST	EAST
19	1♣ 2♣	1♠ 2♥

	WEST	EAST
20	1♦ 2♦ 3♠	1♠ 2NT

To Preferences 20 - 25

	WEST	EAST
21	3♣	3♥

	WEST	EAST	To Preferences 20 - 25
22	1NT	2♥ <sup>1</sup>	
	2♠	3♣	
	1.	Transfer.	

	WEST	EAST
23	1♥	2♣
	2NT	

	WEST	EAST
24	1♥	2♣
	2NT	3♥

	WEST	EAST
25	1♦	2♣
	2♥	3♣

## MY PREFERENCES

To Sequences 1 - 10

1. **Not forcing.** Some pairs play it as forcing, but that gives responder a problem with, for example,

♠ K 8 5 ♥ J 7 5 3 2 ♦ 7 5 4 ♣ Q 6

2. **Not forcing.** Neither 2♣ nor 2♠ was forcing, so 3♦ can't be.

3. **Forcing.** If this sequence isn't forcing, a missed 5-3 heart fit may result.

4. **Not forcing.** This, I think, should be the invitational sequence, but opinions vary about how far the auction should be forcing after a 'fourth-suit' bid by responder. Discuss this sequence and the previous one with your favorite partner.

5. **Not forcing.** Game may be in doubt even if responder has fair values.

6. **Not forcing.**

7. **Not forcing.** With enough strength for game, responder could bid 3NT or try 2♣.

To Sequences 1 - 10

- 8. Forcing.** But if the partnership style is to raise to 2♠ often with three-card support, then not forcing makes sense.
- 9. Not forcing.**
- 10. Not forcing** if the 2♣ opening promises only nine playing tricks, but forcing if it guarantees ten or more.

To Sequences 11 - 21

- 11. Forcing** — unless, perhaps, using four-card majors.
- 12. Forcing.** If responder had real club support with invitational strength, he'd raise to 3♣ at his second turn. However, if responder's second bid had been 2♥, the inference would be weaker: some players might feel constrained to show the hearts, especially playing matchpoints, on a hand such as

♠ A 10 7 6 4 ♥ K J 7 4 ♦ 7 ♣ J 7 5

- 13. Not forcing.** This is one of those 'not forcing but never passed' auctions, but if a bid isn't forcing, it isn't.
- 14. Forcing.** This is no problem for pairs who play the 2♣ response as game-forcing. In Standard, responders have been known to pass 2♠ with minimum values and no spade fit; but since responder almost never passes, it makes sense to play the sequence as forcing.
- 15. Forcing.** Responder's reverse is forcing to game.
- 16. Forcing,** as most play. But since opener will sometimes have a minimum distributional hand, not forcing is playable.
- 17. Not forcing.** Opener's reverse has shown strength and is considered game-forcing in some partnerships; but even 'game-forcing' auctions need not force to the five-level.
- 18. Not forcing.** I'm in the minority here; most experts consider 4♣ forcing.
- 19. Forcing.** A new suit by responder is forcing, but a case exists for playing 2♥ as not forcing here.



**20. Forcing.** Belated support is generally treated as forcing. Still, many players would raise to 2♠ with good three-card spade support and decent values. Therefore, a case exists for playing 3♠ as not forcing — implying distress (see Tip 10 in this section).

**21. Forcing.** Responder has no reason to bid a new suit with a weak hand.

**22. Not forcing.** Most pairs play a new suit after a transfer as forcing. I prefer the invitational treatment since it lets me bid good games with minimum high-card values when the hands fit well.

**23. Not forcing** in Standard, assuming opener can rebid 2NT with nothing extra.

**24. Not forcing,** although opener will seldom pass. Again, this is not a problem in a forcing Two-over-One style. In Standard, this sequence used to be forcing since four-card majors were common, and a pass risked landing the partnership in a 4-3 fit. With five-card majors, a pass by responder is possible.

**25. Forcing.** But if opener can ‘reverse’ to 2♥ with no extra strength after a two-over-one response, not forcing is possible.

No matter what methods you choose, you and partner must agree. If you aren’t sure whether a bid is forcing, avoid making it — place the contract or make a bid partner can’t misinterpret. Look at this deal:

♠ K 8 7	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 20px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="font-size: 8px; text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="font-size: 8px; text-align: center;">W     E</td></tr> <tr><td style="font-size: 8px; text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W     E	S	♠ A Q 5 4 2
N					
W     E					
S					
♥ 7 5 3		♥ A Q			
♦ A J 8 4 2		♦ K 10 7 3			
♣ A 10		♣ K 3			

WEST	EAST
1♦	1♠
2♠	3♦
pass	

East thought 3♦ was forcing; West wasn’t sure. Theory aside, East could have tried for slam by jumping to 4♦, a bid West couldn’t misunderstand. For a related discussion, see Tip 13 in this section.

By 'sensible,' I mean a system that will produce the best results in practice, not in theory. Jeff Meckstroth-Eric Rodwell ('Meckwell', as they are known) use a complex system that constantly changes. Meckwell are professionals, and their long hours of work have paid off in world titles. Longtime partnerships who have spent hundreds of hours discussing their methods can benefit from a complicated style; but when two players strike up a casual partnership, simpler is better. If you play an unfamiliar system or convention, the chance of a misunderstanding outweighs the chance of any gain.

I often watch two players form an impromptu partnership on OKbridge, the Internet bridge server. The exchange is usually abbreviated, and might go something like this:

"NF Stayman Capp 1430 Bergen, pard?"

"No Bergen but supp dbls."

"OK."

Well, it's fine to agree on a few conventions — the fewer the better if you don't have time to discuss them. But style is as important as system; if I had just two minutes to discuss methods with a new partner, I'd ask whether his approach is sound or aggressive. Does he overcall on solid values or on a whim? Are his preempts 'text-book'? Does he like to open light, shapely hands? These *treatments* — different ways of playing natural bids (such as the range for a 1NT opening) — are as important to agree on as conventions. Look at this example:

*Dlr: East*

*Vul: E-W*

	♠ A 10 6 4					
	♥ 3					
	♦ A 10 6 5 4					
	♣ J 5 3					
♠ Q J 9 7 5	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 30px; height: 30px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ 8 3	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ 10 9 5		♥ K 8 7 6 2				
♦ K J		♦ 3 2				
♣ K 10 2		♣ A 9 8 4				
	♠ K 2					
	♥ A Q J 4					
	♦ Q 9 8 7					
	♣ Q 7 6					

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♠	pass	1♦
pass	3♦	pass	1NT
all pass		pass	3NT

When this deal came up on OKbridge, North thought his jump



## CHOOSE A SENSIBLE SYSTEM

preference to 3♦ was invitational. South thought it might be forcing, and as a result North-South landed in 3NT with 23 points.

In an experienced partnership, North might bid 2♣, new minor forcing, over 1NT. South would try 2♥, and now North's conversion to 3♦ would invite. Or perhaps a direct jump to 3♦ by North over 1NT would, by agreement, be invitational. But this is a common sequence even a casual partnership ought to discuss. If I could ask one 'treatment' question of a new partner, it would be, "Are responder's secondary jump rebids and preferences forcing or invitational?"

What happened to 3NT on this deal? West led the ♠7, and South missed a chance when he played low from dummy and won with the king. He continued with the ♦A and another diamond, and West won and led the ♠Q. South took the ace and led a heart: deuce, queen, five. He might have cashed some diamonds next but instead led a club to the deuce, jack and ace. A club return by East at this point would have given the defense five tricks, but East returned a heart. When South's jack won, he was home with four diamonds, three hearts and two spades.

On the first heart, West might have played the ten, denying the jack, instead of signaling count; but East had enough information to make the winning play. East was playing South for a hand such as

♠ K 2 ♥ A Q 9 4 ♦ Q 9 8 7 ♣ Q 10 6

but then South would have started on clubs earlier to set up his ninth trick. By taking an early heart finesse, South might give the defense time to establish a heart for the setting trick.

Many casual partnerships go into battle with the popular Two-over-One Game-forcing style, in which an unpassed responder's bid of a new suit at the two-level usually forces to game. Two-over-One reminds me of the upgrades to word-processors that appear regularly. They have lots of extra bells and whistles and let you delete a word in six new and different ways. They may be better in theory, but my experience is that the best word processor is the one the user is most comfortable with — and in my case that's my old dinosaur, Wordstar.

Marshall Miles boldly wrote that nobody could become a world-class player using Two-over-One. I think Marshall was saying it's hard to develop good judgment when you use a system with so many constraints. I'll go further: *my experience suggests that Two-over-One is less effective than old-fashioned methods, especially in casual partnerships.*

One of the many flaws in Two-over-One is that responder can't show his side strength with an invitational hand. Suppose you hold

♠ A K Q 9 7 ♥ A 6 4 2 ♦ 6 ♣ Q 6 5

You open 1♠, and partner responds 1NT, forcing. You rebid 2♥, and he jumps to 3♠, inviting game. Do you bid 4♠ now? Sorry, partner has

♠ J 10 4 ♥ Q 7 3 ♦ A K 8 4 ♣ 7 4 2

The opening lead is a club, and they take three clubs and exit with a trump. The ♥K is wrong, and you lose two hearts as well. Down two.

Did you say you'd pass 3♠? Sorry, you missed a good game. Partner has

♠ J 10 4 ♥ Q 7 3 ♦ 7 4 2 ♣ A K 8 4

You ruff the second diamond, draw trumps and try the clubs. They split 4-2, but the ♥K is inside. Making four. Using old-fashioned methods, the bidding on the second pair of hands would go

♠ A K Q 9 7 ♥ A 6 4 2 ♦ 6 ♣ Q 6 5	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W S E</td></tr> </table>	N	W S E	♠ J 10 4 ♥ Q 7 3 ♦ 7 4 2 ♣ A K 8 4
N				
W S E				

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♠	2♣
2♥	2♠
4♠	

but on the first pair of hands, after

♠ A K Q 9 7 ♥ A 6 4 2 ♦ 6 ♣ Q 6 5	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W S E</td></tr> </table>	N	W S E	♠ J 10 4 ♥ Q 7 3 ♦ A K 8 4 ♣ 7 4 2
N				
W S E				

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♠	2♦
2♥	2♠

opener might pass, disliking the misfit.

The advent of lighter opening bids hasn't made Two-over-One more accurate. I watched a good pair bid these hands as follows:

♠ 8 4 2 ♥ Q 10 5 ♦ A Q 7 ♣ A J 5 2	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W S E</td></tr> </table>	N	W S E	♠ Q 5 ♥ A K J 8 7 6 ♦ J 6 3 ♣ 7 3
N				
W S E				

WEST	EAST
2♣	1♥
4♥	2♥

Down one. If East is going to open hands like that, West mustn't force to game — but how can he not?


Sometimes responder will want to force to game — for a while.

♠ 9 4 2 ♥ 6 ♦ A J 5 4 2 ♣ A K 9 4		♠ J 6 ♥ A K Q 8 7 ♦ Q 6 3 ♣ 7 3 2
--	---	--

WEST	EAST
	1♥
2♦	2♥
3♣	3♦
Groan.	

West would love to pass but cannot. The 2♦ response created a game force, and East might bid the same way with a much better hand. Even a slam could be cold.

A fundamental problem with Two-over-One is illustrated by this deal from an IMP game on OKbridge.

♠ 3 ♥ 7 5 3 ♦ A K 10 ♣ A Q 9 8 5 2		♠ A K Q J 10 7 4 ♥ A 10 ♦ 7 ♣ 10 6 3
---	---	---

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♠	pass
2♣	pass	2♠(!)	pass
3♦	pass	3♥	dbl
pass	pass	4♠	all pass

Since West's 2♣ was forcing to game, East saw no need to jump despite his massive trick-taking power, club fit and red-suit controls; he could rebid 2♠ 'to save space'. This bid told West nothing. Neither did East's 3♥; and whatever his 4♠ was supposed to show, West didn't get the message. Using old-fashioned methods, I would expect:

WEST	EAST
	1♠
2♣	3♠
4♣	4♥ <sup>1</sup>
5♦	6♠

1. Cuebid. With hearts, East would bid 2♥ over 2♣.

The actual auction was a typical Two-over-One debacle: murky 'minimum bidding', with much suggested-implied-inferred. Nobody

ever made a good descriptive bid, and neither player had any idea what his partner held. I consistently see Two-over-One players produce equally unsuccessful auctions.

When I cited this deal in my column in the *Spectator*, the monthly online publication for OKbridge subscribers, several readers wrote in rebuttal, citing chapter and verse from books on Two-over-One. Their contention was that East, not the system, was at fault: East should have jumped to 3♠ over 2♣ to show a solid suit. One *Spectator* reader suggested that my deal was a poor example of Two-over-One's shortcomings; he contended that in fairness I should have shown how proponents of Two-over-One would bid it. Well, the actual East-West were experts, but I couldn't call them Two-over-One 'proponents' if that implies authority. I can't say they were a regular partnership, but I believe they had played together before. In any case, they must have felt at ease with Two-over-One, else they wouldn't have been using it. Yet they produced an auction I found incomprehensible.

But let's say I did pick a poor example. How about these hands, which a Two-over-One pair bid in *The Bridge World*?

♠ K 9 5 3 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W   E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W   E	S	♠ Q 4
N					
W   E					
S					
♥ A Q J 4		♥ K			
♦ A K		♦ Q 10 7 5 4 2			
♣ 8 4		♣ A K 7 3			

WEST	EAST
1♠	2♦
2♥	2NT
3♦	3♠
3NT	pass

No doubt 'proponents of Two-over-One' would bid these hands to the excellent slam; but East-West weren't 'proponents' — only multiple national champions. The Two-over-One advocates may again insist that the system wasn't at fault: West should have bid more or East should have bid more. I know what I consistently see when even experienced players use Two-over-One: failure to make a descriptive, value bid, leaving the partnership groping.

We could argue the theoretical merits of Two-over-One forever; we all have prejudices about what systems work best. But the fact is that deals are bid at the table, and most players are interested in actual gains, not theoretical ones. Moreover, no system is more effective than the players using it. Most of us were brought up on simple methods. We all know what a jump rebid of 3♠ means in Standard; but in Two-over-One, its meaning depends on your partner's biases or

on whose book he has read. In fact, if you play Two-over-One, you'll meet dozens of ambiguous sequences. I can illustrate that with one of my own disasters: I was trying to play Two-over-One in an unpracticed partnership, and we had this simple auction:

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♠	2♦
3NT	

Opener thought 3NT showed extra strength; responder did not. It cost a missed slam that mama-papa bidders would have reached in ten seconds — and it cost a Vanderbilt match. The practical test of a system is the results it achieves — not only for partnerships who have discussed their methods at length, but for casual partnerships who are concerned with ease of use and avoiding catastrophic misunderstandings. Playing any system without thorough discussion is foolhardy; that is the real lesson. But if your system is Two-over-One, you magnify the problem. If that's the system you choose, fine; but get ready to do your homework — lots of it.

One final observation: two good players using simple methods will beat two poor players using a system that is theoretically superior. Systems and conventions don't make winners.



“I was a professional player and, I thought, a rather better teacher when I began to write articles and books on bridge. In 1984 I became a co-editor of the ACBL’s magazine, and I retired from competition and never un-retired; I found pounding away at a word processor easier and more rewarding than coping with a partner and two opponents. If you think this makes me a questionable counselor, I can’t blame you. But in my twenty years as an author, editor, analyst and syndicated columnist, I’ve

had plenty of chances to observe what factors make a winning player. A solid foundation, partnership trust, discipline, focus and judgment will make a winner of anyone, and those are the themes in this book.

*Becoming a Bridge Expert* contains four main sections: constructive bidding, dummy play, competitive bidding and defense. Each section has fifteen tips, and most begin with a problem, proceed to illustrative deals and end with a problem so you can see if you have the idea. A fifth section deals with the more personal aspects of the game.” *Frank Stewart*

**FRANK STEWART**, of Fayette AL, is one of the world’s leading bridge journalists. He has published hundreds of articles in most of the world’s leading bridge magazines and on-line publications, including technical pieces, tournament reports, fiction and humor, and he has written eighteen books. In 1986 he began a collaboration with Alfred Sheinwold to produce the syndicated newspaper column *Sheinwold on Bridge*. After Sheinwold’s death in March 1997, the column continued under Stewart’s byline as *Sheinwold’s Bridge* and in January 2000 became *Daily Bridge Club*. It appears in more than 150 newspapers and on several internet sites. He is a frequent analyst for ACBL-wide and District-wide charity events, and is a major contributor to *The Official Encyclopedia of Bridge*.

