

Well-known teacher and player **Jerry Helms** answers your bridge questions. Send your questions to "Ask Jerry," c/o Jerry Helms, 5000 Montclair Avenue, Charlotte, NC 28211.

Ask Jerry



Dear Jerry: I thought that when responder bids a new suit opener has to bid again. Is this true?

V. Bertrand
Pittsburgh, PA

Dear V.B.: As a general guideline, a new suit by responder is forcing ... but only as a guideline! The idea is that any time a player makes a bid where the strength of the hand is yet to be established, the bid must be forcing. For example:

OPENER	RESPONDER	
1♣	1♥	← new suit by responder

The 1♥ response shows at least four hearts and at least 6 points. It doesn't have an upper limit, so

responder could have a hand like this. The 1♥ response is forcing. Responder knows the contract should be played in at least a game contract, but needs more information to pick the suit or notrump.

Contrast that auction to this one:

OPENER	RESPONDER	
1♠	1NT	← new suit by responder
2♣	2♥	← new suit by responder

2♥ is a new suit by responder, but it is not forcing. The 1NT response described a hand with 6–9 or 10 points, putting an upper limit on the strength. With 10 or more points

and a heart suit, responder would have bid 2♥ in the first place. The combined hands might look like this:

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

The best place for the partnership is 2♥. If responder's bid of 2♥ was forcing, the partnership would not be able to stop in the best contract.

Here's another auction where responder first limits the hand and then bids a new suit:

OPENER	RESPONDER	
1♠	Pass	
	2♥	← new suit by responder

Responder's new suit is not forcing because the original pass set an upper limit on responder's strength ... no more than 12 points.

Bids are only forcing if the upper range is yet to be defined. If the limits are fairly well established, partner can choose to pass or continue. —**JH**