

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♠	INT	← new suit by responder
2♣	2♥	← new suit by responder

2♥ is a new suit by responder, but it is not forcing. The INT 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 forcing only if the upper range is yet to be defined. If the limits are fairly well established, partner may choose to pass or continue. — JH

SOLID GOLD TIP

Should you preempt with this hand? Of course!

Holding a long strong suit and limited strength, you preempt. The goal is to properly describe your hand to partner while making it difficult for the opponents to bid accurately. The *real* question is, "How high should you preempt?"

Many players still use the classic **Rule of Two and Three**. It states that if you are vulnerable, you can bid for two tricks more than you have; if you are non-vulnerable, for three tricks more than you have. Fine, but it simply does not go far enough. It deals only with your side's vulnerability, failing to take notice of the opponents' vulnerability. Basically, when you preempt you want to take care to not be penalized for more than the value of the opponents' potential game. Unless you take their



Rhoda Walsh of Las Vegas, Nevada was a practicing attorney and is now a bridge professional. She is a WBF World Master and one of the top women players of all time, having won many North American titles.

Rhoda was one of the first proponents of the popular two-over-one system. The original concept came from her former husband, Richard Walsh, and they would practice the system with Paul Soloway and John Swanson.

vulnerability into consideration, there's no way to make this distinction. Thus, I prefer the **Rule of Two, Three, and Four**, which is as follows:

Vul vs. nonvul: Bid for **two** tricks more than you have.

Equal vul: Bid for **three** tricks more than you have.

Nonvul vs vul: Bid for **four** tricks more than you have.

This far more practical rule is based on the hopeful promise that partner will prevent disaster by providing one trick for us — and a good partner will! Using the rule on our example six-trick hand, at favorable vulnerability we would open 4♣; at equal vulnerability, 3♣; and at unfavorable vulnerability, 2♠. Yes! A weak two-bid on a seven-card suit. It is all we can afford and it is permitted.

So, my tip for you is:
Use the Rule of Two, Three and Four.