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It's Just MayHem

Free bids

"Free bid" refers to bidding in a situation when passing is an alternative — partner still has another opportunity to bid. The standard understanding is that bidding freely in a competitive auction is considered constructive. It is important that a partnership fully understand their use of free bids.

West Partner	North	East You	South
1♣	1♦	1♥	

In this auction, your 1♥ free bid shows at least four hearts and at least 7 high-card points. You are bidding to show some values.

West Partner	North	East You	South
1♣	1♥	1♠	

Your 1♠ free bid shows at least five spades and at least 7 HCP. Because partner has another chance to act regardless of what you do, your free bid shows values. Note that your bid shows at least five spades because you have a negative double available to show only four spades.

West Partner	North	East You	South
1♦	1♥	1NT	

Your free 1NT call shows a balanced

hand with a heart stopper and 7–10 HCP.

Please note that the suit bids in the first two examples are considered unlimited and forcing unless responder is a passed hand.

These auctions should not be confused with sequences in which partner makes a takeout double and RHO passes:

West Partner	North	East You	South
			1♣
Dbl	Pass	?	

Here, a one-level suit bid is not a free bid, but rather a choice of suits. However, had RHO bid, your free bid shows some values, *e.g.*:

West Partner	North	East You	South
			1♣
Dbl	1♦	1♥	

A free bid of a new suit at the two level is somewhat different: The hand doesn't have to be quite as good as it would need to be had your RHO passed. Thus, the strength of the two-level bid ranges from 10 HCP to unlimited. For example:

West Partner	North	East You	South
1♦	1♠	2♣	

shows at least five good clubs and at least 10 HCP and is forcing for one round.

West Partner	North	East You	South
1♣	1♠	2♦	

shows at least five diamonds and is forcing. This is usually a better hand because you've forced partner to the

three level if he wants to rebid clubs. If you have a minimum, you should be prepared to pass opener's 3♣ rebid or rebid your own diamonds showing at least a six-card suit and 10–11 HCP.

Some 2/1 players insist that these two-level bids are still game-forcing regardless of the interference.

There are at least three situations when a two-level bid shows a good suit but is not forcing:

- ❖ When you are a passed hand;
- ❖ When the intervening bid is a double;
- ❖ When you and your partner play negative free bids. A negative free bid allows a responder to bid a new suit freely over an opponent's overcall. It is not forcing and shows a long suit in a relatively weak hand. Because this is contrary to the standard treatment of a free, two- or three-level overcall — which is forcing — it is Alertable.

Free bids come up in many other competitive situations and generally show more values and/or shape than passing. Some examples should help:

West Partner	North	East You	South
1♣	1♠	Dbl	2♠
3♣			

Your double is negative, showing at least four hearts. Partner's free 3♣ bid shows at least six clubs and is forward-going.

West Partner	North	East You	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠
3♥			

3♥ shows extra length or strength, but it is not a game try. □