

Bergen Raises of 1 of a Major

<u>Response</u>	<u>Opening 1♥</u>	note	<u>Opening 1♠</u>	note
2♥	3 card raise	*1	natural and forcing	
2♠	weak barrage, non forcing		3 card raise	*1
2NT	Jacoby 2NT	*2	Jacoby 2NT	*2
3♣	4 card raise (6-10)	*3	4 card raise (6-10)	*3
3♦	4 card raise (11 pts)	*4	4 card limit raise (11pts)	*4
3♥	4 card pre-emptive raise (0-6)	*5	Splinter raise with relays	*6
3♠	Splinter raise with relays	*6	4 card pre-emptive raise (0-6)	*5
3NT	3 card balanced, non forcing		3 card balanced, non forcing	
4♣	Big balanced raise	*7	Big balanced raise	*7
4♦	Good balanced raise	*7	Good balanced raise	*7
4♥	Weak pre-emptive raise		Natural, pre-emptive	
4♠	Natural, pre-emptive		Weak, pre-emptive raise	
4NT	Keycard Blackwood		Keycard Blackwood	

* Notes:-

1) The simple raise to the two level

When playing Bergen raises, a direct raise to two of partner's major promises 6-10 points and exactly three trumps. With four trumps you use the 3♣ bid and with just two trumps you go via the forcing NoTrump (assuming that you play two-over-one).

2) Jacoby Two NoTrumps

There are numerous variations around. Jacoby 2NT promises 4-card support for partner's major, no shortage (else splinter) and at least opening values. It asks partner to define his hand further. I personally prefer to play that a Jacoby 2NT response has slam interest, so 16+, and with a hand of 12-15 points I use Keycard Swiss (see *7).

3) The three level 3♣ bid showing a sound two level raise!

This is the most controversial aspect of Bergen raises. In traditional Bergen raises 3♣ shows a sound raise to two of the major and promises four trumps. The principle behind this is that there are at least 9 combined trumps and the 3-level bid safe according to the Law of Total Tricks. One problem is that there is less room for game-tries.

4) The jump to 3♦ - a sound raise to 3♥/♠

This is totally artificial and simply shows what a jump to three of partner's major would show using normal methods; i.e. 4 card support and about 11 points.

5) The weak jump to the three level

- ♠ Q873 Suppose you hold this hand and partner opens 1♠. RHO passes and you pass
- ♥ 54 (or bid 2♠). LHO doubles (or bids ♥'s) and the opponents end up in 4♥ making.
- ♦ J654 If RHO had doubled you would immediately have bid a pre-emptive 3♠ of course.
- ♣ 976 Playing Bergen Raises you can do just that even though there is no double.
This is undoubtedly a great feature of Bergen Raises.

6) Ambiguous Splinter Relays

This is one aspect of Bergen raises that I really like – it saves three bidding slots and loses nothing. But beware – many people say that they play Bergen Raises but do not play these ambiguous splinters. In fact, playing ambiguous splinters is often a big plus (over simple splinters) if opener has no slam interest, as the defender's are left in the dark about dummy's shortage. These same splinter relays are used as ambiguous splinters after Stayman and also as ambiguous splinters after a Jacoby 2♦/♥ transfer and are well worth mastering. The responses when ♠'s are trumps given below are the 'official' Bergen's ♠ sequence. They are rather illogical and easy to forget - actually there is extra room in the ♠ sequence to show a void and there is a superior set of responses given in my Pattaya bridge web site.

After 1♥-3♠, 3NT asks: -

- 4♣ = singleton/void ♣
- 4♦ = singleton/void ♦
- 4♥ = singleton/void ♥

After 1♠-3♥, 3♠ asks :-

- 3NT = singleton/void ♣
- 4♣ = singleton/void ♦
- 4♦ = singleton/void ♥

Thereafter opener may sign off, cue bid, or use key card with the agreed suit. If cue bidding, if responder cue bids his shortage, it is a void. We do not splinter with singleton aces.

7) The 4♣/♦ bids to show big hands

These bid are rarely used and really of little use. In fact I simply cannot see the point of the 4♣ bid when you can use Jacoby 2NT and find out about partner's hand. My recommendation is to totally scrap these meanings and use 4♣ and 4♦ as Keycard Swiss. So 4♣ is 12-15 points with 2 keycards and a feature (third keycard, shortage or the queen of trumps) and 4♦ shows 12-15 points but lacks the requirements for 4♣ (so actually 4♦ is the same as the Bergen bid but more specific).

Note. Some players play 'inverted Bergen' in which the 3♣ and 3♦ bids are reversed. This gives more room for investigating slam when partner has 11 points but gives even less room for a game try when partner has 6-9 points. I recommend 'simple' Bergen. This has a definite advantage when ♥'s are trumps as then the sequence 1♥ - 3♣ - 3♦ is available as a general game try.

Warning. Even if have agreed to play Bergen raises, many do not understand or use the ambiguous splinters and will take jumps to 4♣/♦ as simple splinters. The use of these 4♣/♦ bids needs to be clarified, especially if you wish to use my recommended Keycard Swiss.

Bergen Raises, along with other interesting concepts such as Walsh and Kickback are defined in Marty Bergen's book 'Better bidding with Bergen'.