

# Fit Bids in Competition

By Neil H. Timm

Playing 2/1 or Precision it often happens that the opponents compete. For example, let's say that partner opens 1♥ and your RHO overcalls 1♠. There are many bids to show a fit with partner.

A few commonly used bids are:

1. 2♥
2. 3♥
3. 4♥
4. 2♠
5. A splinter bid of 3♠\*/4♣\*/4♦\*
6. 3♣\*/3♦\* FSJ
7. Bidding 2♣/2♦, making a negative double, bidding 1NT or making a delayed raise (if given another opportunity).

Because (7) fails to show an immediate "fit" it is not as useful and what happens if the opponents next bid 3♠/4♠.

The most common raises are (1) to (3): (1) is a simple raise with 3-card support with probably a balanced hand; (2) and (3) are preemptive raises with 4-card and 5-card support, respectively.

The splinter bid 3♠\* requires 4-card support with 12/13+ fit points and is game forcing with a singleton/void in spades; however, it says nothing about the other three suits. So, what do you do if the opponents bid 4♠/5♠?

What about the minor suit splinter bids? They again show 4-card support but say nothing about waisted values in spades. Shortness in clubs or diamonds may or may not help partner.

That brings us to the cue bid of 2♣. The way most pairs play a cue-bid is that it doesn't necessarily promise a fit. It could be a hand with game-going values that's looking for or showing a spade stopper. A cue-bid with support can represent just about any hand that is interested in a game or slam contract and can be anywhere from a limit raise with 3-card support to a hand with unlimited value.

Observe that we did not assign a meaning to 2NT. The bid normally shows an invitational balanced hand with stoppers in the enemy suit. How useful is that?" Bidding a natural 2NT in competition is rarely right. If partner passes, we may wish that we had tried for a penalty double. If partner bids 3NT, one can expect a spade lead! Better have the major suit stopped twice.

Some may use the 2NT\* bid as a limit plus bid with 4-card support, but not game forcing.

## Fit-Showing Jump (FSJ)

The major purpose of Fit Showing Jumps is **to discover double fits that are important when deciding whether to bid on in competition and in discovering slam possibilities.**

In the sequence 1♥ - 1♠ - 3♣\*/3♦\* the 3-level minor suit bids are FSJ bids and **not weak** jump-shifts in competition or a Bergen raise! How useful are jump-shift bids as natural suit bids a good place to play? Not very. It's seldom that you want to suggest your own suit at the 3-level after partner has opened. Bergen Raises only show a trump fit and say nothing about the other three suits.

The FSJ is exactly what it sounds like: a jump in a new suit, opposite an opening bid and after intervention by RHO's bid or double; it guarantees a fit with partner and values with 5-cards in the suit bid. The jump shift is at one level higher than needed in the new bid suit. Splinter bids are 2-levels higher.

What is the difference between a FSJ and Mixed Raise? A Mixed Raise (MR) bid is used in response to an overcall bid by partner (e.g., 1♣/1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠ - MR bid 3♦\*/3♣\*). Some fail to make this distinction and call both bids either FSJ or MR.

A FSJ bid shows at least 4-card support (some allow 3-card support with an A/K/Q in partner's suit) and 12/13+ fit points. The second suit should have 5-cards, so we have a 9-card fit in two suits: yes, a double fit in hearts and the bid minor.

How high should we bid? The normal definition of a fit-showing jump requires a jump to the level below the contract. **Playing FSJs it is most often agreed that they take priority over splinters.** If both a single jump and a double jump are available, then the lower is the fit showing jump and the higher is a splinter by partnership agreement.

FSJ bids require discussion; you must discuss how you play 1♠ - 2♣ - 4♥ (natural or splinter) and the meaning of 2NT\* after a X; is it 3/4-card support? Finally, some play those FJS bids are on even by a passed hand with a lower limit: 10-12 or 8-11 fit points by agreement and others play them off.

The basic idea of Fit Showing Jump bids was widely popularized by Andrew Robson and Oliver Segal in their book *Partnership Bidding in Bridge* (1993). However, some refer to the bids as "Flower Bids".

Partner opens and RHO bids:

- 1♥ (1♠): 2♠ – three trumps, invitational or better
- 1♥ (1♠): 2NT - 4-card support with stoppers
- 1♥ (1♠): 3♣\* - FSJ
- 1♠ (2♣): 3♥ – limit raise
- 1♥ (2♠): 4♣\* – game forcing heart raise with a good club suit.

You hold the following hand: ♠52 ♥Q987 ♦ - ♣AKJ542

and the RHO bids 1♠. Clearly the optimal bid is 3♣\* since the opponents likely have a fit in spades. Depending on your agreement some may bid 3♥/4♥/4♦\*/3♣\*. Knowledge of a double fit may allow partner to bid 5♥ over 4♠.

### **What is Lost**

What do we lose by playing fit-showing jumps? We lose the ability to make most preemptive bids of our own suit in competition. Depending on your agreement you may also lose the ability to splinter in one of the two side suits but always retain the splinter in the overcalled suit.

If you play 2NT as the four-piece raise for both overcalls and doubles, then we give up the immediate natural 2NT overcall, as described above and are obliged to start with a negative double and to then bid 2NT at our next turn if available.

What may go wrong? The worst thing that can happen is that partner forgets and passes the jump bid, thinking that it is preemptive.

What about the times that you have a long strong suit of your own and want to preempt in a minor but can't because you would be showing a fit? The first option is to pass and then bid the minor later (that will *not* be a fit-showing jump since we didn't do it right away. But suppose you are willing to bid 5♣/5♦ if they reach a major suit game. Why not bid 5♣/5♦ immediately (assuming you do not play Exclusion Keycard Blackwood) with a void/singleton in their suit.

### **Summary**

Fit-showing jumps describe a hand accurately in a competitive auction and may help partner to decide whether to bid on or defend when the opponents use up bidding space and it helps partner with a lead.

If you adopt JSJs there are many situations you must discuss with your partner so adopt them with caution.

Reference: Seagram, Barbara and Bird, David (2003, p 115), "25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know", Master Point Press.