



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(21) Hand Evaluation in Jacoby 2NT and Splinter Auctions

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Level: 1

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General Hand Evaluation: Re-Evaluation

Fit is not just about finding a good trump suit; it is also about how well the entire hands fit together. When we are first evaluating our hand we begin by considering our points and the size of our trump fit. But as the auction continues, we need to re-evaluate our hand as we visualize the way our whole hand fits together with our partner's hand. In doing this we consider the location of our honors and the type of honors we have in each suit.

So what should we be looking for? Put simply, values that make our hand more powerful! This means values that will make our hand mesh well with and enhance partner's hand should be upgraded and values that will be of little use to partner should be downgraded. Here are some basic guidelines.

- Having our values concentrated in our long suits makes our hand play better; values in our short suits have less offensive potential.
- The same evaluation applies to partner's suits as well: values in partner's suits should be considered in a 'long suit' and be upgraded, while values in other suits can be downgraded. Values opposite partner's short suits (especially singletons and voids) need to be downgraded dramatically.
- The types of values we have in each of the suits are also important factors.
 - "Soft" values (Queens and Jacks) in partner's suit(s) are usually very useful cards, while soft values in other suits are much less valuable.
 - Controls (Aces and Kings) are best in a long suit (ours or partner's), where they can help set up the smaller cards in the suit. But unlike soft values, these controls could still take a trick opposite partner's shortness and thus retain some of their value.



Bridge Vocabulary

(These are some bridge terms with which you should become familiar.)

- **Offensively-Oriented Hands** - These are hands that have most of their points concentrated in their long suits. The long suits tend to set up quickly and take a lot of tricks when our side is declaring. These hands also tend NOT to perform as well on defense, since one of the opponents is often short in our long suit – making most of our pts ruffable.
- **Defensively-Oriented Hands** - These are hands with most of their points concentrated in their short suits. These hands tend to perform poorly when declaring – it becomes difficult to set up our long suits since these suits are so weak (contain few pts.) In contrast, these hands tend to do well on defense since they have many points in the suits where the opponents have length.

Slam Bidding Tools

Now that we understand how to re-evaluate our hand, we need some tools to tell us more about partner's shape. The primary piece of information these conventions will give us is where partner has shortness (singleton or void). When we have waste opposite the shortness (Kings or soft values) we will downgrade our hand, but when we have no waste (such as xxx or Axxx) we will upgrade our hand and move toward slam, even with minimum values.

Remember, we're now playing with a 30-point deck.

Jacoby 2NT

1M 2NT* Artificial, Game Forcing Raise – showing 4+card support and 12+ HCP.

Note: Generally speaking this is a balanced hand with 12+ pts or an unbalanced hand with 15+ pts.

We respond to this 2NT bid by showing our shortness at the 3-level or showing our strength if we do not have any shortness. We show our strength using fast arrival:

- 4M Minimum (usually 12-13 pts)
- 3NT Extra Values (minimum w/ lots of controls or 14-15 pts)
- 3M Good Hand (16+ pts)

Note: We can use 4-level responses in other suits to show additional hand types, but these are relatively rare and are not the core usefulness of the convention.



Splinters

1M “Double Jump Shift” Game Forcing Raise - 4+card support and 11-14 pts, shortness in the suit bid (singleton or void)

Example

1♠ 4♣* 11-14 pts, 4c ♥, 0-1 ♣

Using both of these conventions partner signs off in 4M with lots of wasted values. With few wasted values, partner cuebids or makes other tries for slam.

Conclusion

We could continue our discussion of hand evaluation and re-evaluation endlessly, but I want to end this discussion by summarizing a few of the things that these slam bidding tools allow us to consider and reconsider about our hands:

- Fitting Cards
- Wasted Values
- Fits
 - Size of fits
 - Double fits
 - Misfits
- Sources of Tricks
- Ruffing Values