

Jacoby 2NT and Splinters

By Neil H. Timm

If one opens one of a major and partner likes the suit, a common practice playing the 2/1 Game Force System is to use the Jacoby 2NT conventional bid.

Jacoby 2NT

There are many variations for the bid; I will review a **basic** Jacoby 2NT system of bids. It is always best to review the bids with your partner since the same name for the convention has many variations.

(1) Partner opens one of a major in the first or second seat

(2) Your right hand opponent (RHO) has passed. If the right hand opponent has not passed some play that the Jacoby 2NT bid is **off** and others play conventions called “Bromad” with the “Jordon 2NT Convention”: a later discussion.

You respond by JUMPING to 2NT* when you have

(1) 4+ trumps (not 3)

(2) 13+ dummy/support points, with no upper limit

The Jacoby 2NT* bid **MUST BE ALERTED** (the * denotes an alert)!

Let's look at an example using Hands 1 and D.

Opener Hand 1: ♠ AKQ105 ♥ 10982♦ 6 ♣ J67

Responder Hand D: ♠ 9876 ♥ AK ♦ 75 ♣ AQ1084

With a five-card major and twelve starting points, opener bids 1♠. Partner (Hand D) has sixteen Dummy Points and four cards in the major. He must bid 2NT*. The two hands have twenty-eight points between them; hence, game in the major is certain. However, is it close to slam?

Playing 2/1, a common question asked is whether or not with 13+ dummy/support points you show a long second suit first. **Should you show your strong side suit instead of using Jacoby 2NT*?**

NO!
IT IS ALWAYS BEST TO SHOW YOUR TRUMP SUPPORT FIRST.

If you make a 2/1 bid and then support the major it usually shows only three trumps.

Playing 2/1, another question asked is whether or not to use Jacoby with a singleton or a void.

NO!

IT IS ALWAYS BEST TO SHOW shortness with TRUMP SUPPORT

Let's replace Hand D with the following hand: Hand D*: ♠ 98762 ♥ AK ♦ 7 ♣ AJ1085

Hand D*: 13HCP + [Undervalued Honors = 3 – Overvalued Honors = 1] = 2; no adjustment + 1 length points + 0 for dubious doubletons (note that the AK does not qualify). Total starter points = 15. Hand (D*) has a singleton with 5 trumps, add 3 points. The total for the hand, Dummy Points = 18.

Do not bid Jacoby 2NT*; make a double jump bid in your short suit 4♦* a SPLINTER BID (Playing Direct Splinter Bids) ---- More on this Soon.

Jacoby 2NT* Responses by Opener

Rebids by Opener	Suit Length	Bergen Points
3 (new suit)*	Singleton/Void	12+
3 (major suit opened)*	5/6+ in major	18+
3NT*	(5-3-3-2) balanced	15-17
4 (new suit)	4+ card suit	12+ to 17
4 (major suit opened)	5+ major	12+ to 14

A jump to the four level in a new suit after 2NT* is clearly invitational to slam. When showing a singleton after 2NT*, the trump suit should contain at least two of the top three honors. **Do not show a singleton with a weak trump suit.**

Furthermore, a new suit at the four-level should contain two of the top three honors in the suit bid or be a five-card suit. **All rebids by opener must be alerted (*=alert) and explained in detail if asked.**

Examples Responses to Jacoby 2NT*

The bidding goes 1♠-2NT*. What do you bid?

(1) ♠AKJ84 ♥7 ♦K10987 ♣A2

Show your singleton, bid 3♥*. You have nineteen Bergen points (See Hand Evaluation)

(2) ♠AKJ84 ♥107 ♦54 ♣AQ108

You have a nice four-card suit, bid 4♣* with seventeen Bergen points. You are too unbalanced to bid notrump.

(3) ♠AKJ84 ♥K107 ♦KJ4 ♣76

You have a balanced hand, bid 3NT* with sixteen Bergen points.

(4) ♠AKJ84 ♥J107 ♦QJ4 ♣76

You have a weak hand, using Fast Arrival, bid 4♠.

(5) ♠AKQ842 ♥ void ♦AQ42 ♣J76

You have a great hand, bid 3♥* to show shortness. NOTE SLAM IS POSSIBLE!

Following is a summary of descriptive bids following Jacoby 2NT.

After 1♥ - 2NT*

3♣* = ♣ shortage
3♦* = ♦ shortage
3♥* = good hand with no shortage
3♠* = ♠ shortage
3NT* = better hand with no shortage
4♣ = a 4+card ♣ suit
4♦ = a 4+card ♦ suit
4♥ = poor hand with no shortage
(Fast arrival)

After 1♠ - 2NT*

3♣* = ♣ shortage
3♦* = ♦ shortage
3♥* = ♥ shortage
3♠* = good hand with no shortage
3NT* = better hand with no shortage
4♣ = a 4+card ♣ suit
4♦* = a 4+card ♦ suit
4♥* = a 4+card ♥ suit
4♠ = poor hand with no shortage
(Fast arrival)

Jacoby 2NT* Example (1)

West	East
♠KQ965	♠A8742
♥K	♥1076
♦KQ1043	♦AJ6
♣84	♣AK

West has 14 starting points and east has 17 starting points.

West opens 1♠ and with 18 dummy points east bids 2NT*.

West can show his singleton heart or his 5+diamond suit. Let's suppose east bids 4♦*. Now east has a problem. With no heart control he cannot bid Blackwood; hence, he must cue bid 5♣ to

show a club control. Not sure of a heart control, west bids 5♠, and east may pass.

To keep the bidding at a lower level, it would be better for each to bid 3♥* to show his heart singleton. Using Roman Keycard Blackwood 1430, missing one ace east would bid 6♠.

Jacoby 2NT Example (2)

West	East
♠Q83	♠J742
♥J9732	♥AKQ4
♦KQ10	♦6
♣AJ	♣KQ64

West has 12 starting points and east has 16 starting points.

West opens 1♥ and with 19 dummy points east bids 2NT*.

Without a short suit, west bids 4♥; showing no slam interest.

Because east has a singleton diamond and four card support a better bid for east is to splinter! Now E-W will get to slam.

Splinter Bids

The 2/1 game force bids and the Jacoby 2NT* bid are two bidding tools used to reach a game contract in a major and to investigate slam. Another type of bid used to investigate game and perhaps slams are splinter bids. Splinter bids show two important things, a fit in the major (four trumps) and shortness (a singleton or void) in a non-trump, side suit. To employ a splinter bid, you again must have 13+ Dummy/Support Points. With shortness, a game in a major suit may be realized with as few as twenty-two points and a slam with as few as twenty-six points. Thus, they are powerful tools in reaching a game or slam.

There are two kinds of splinter bids (1) direct splinters that are used by the masses and the newer version called (2) concealed/ambiguous splinters that are yet another aspect of Bergen Raises within the 2/1 system.

A DOUBLE-JUMP in a shortness suit other than partner's major shows a direct splinter bid. It is a game-forcing raise in the major suit and shows shortness (singleton/void). The Direct Splinter bids are defined as follows:

1♥ - double jump to 3♠*/4♣*/4♦* shows SHORTNESS in spades, clubs, and diamonds and MUST BE ALERTED.

The corresponding jump bids for the opening of one spade are:

1♠ - double jump to 4♥*/4♣*/4♦* shows SHORTNESS in hearts, clubs, and diamonds.

They can also be played over a minor suit opening bid; they must be discussed with your partner.

1♣ - 3♦*/3♥*/3♠* are direct splinter bids and Over 1♦ - 3♥*/3♠*/4♣* are the direct splinter bids.

While shortness is important, it only has value when the information conveyed to the opener allows the opener to evaluate how well the two hands fit, knowing exactly where the shortness resides. An example will help to clarify this point. Consider the two hands:

Opener	♠ AKJ83	♥ KQ104	♦ 567	♣ 7
Responder	♠ Q762	♥ 7	♦ AJ42	♣ A567

With spades as trump, opener must lose one heart and one or two diamonds, depending on the lie of the cards. But, suppose we switch the red suits in responder's hand (dummy) and observe the difference

Switched Dummy	♠ Q762	♥ AJ42	♦ 7	♣ A567
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In the first case, opener's heart honors are duplicated by responder's singleton; both hands prevent two heart losers. In the second case, the defenders hold the diamond honors AKQ of diamonds, but only the ace is useful to the opponents. What can one conclude from this example?

- (1) If a singleton or void is opposite high card concentrations, it has less value.
- (2) If a singleton or void is opposite partner's low, losing cards, with high values more usefully placed, it has effective value.

Rule: An effective holding is an asset while duplicated holdings are a liability. Or, more importantly, you want your losers opposite shortness to allow losers to be trumped.

While shortness knowledge may help you to reach game (when of value), it also tells your opponents exactly where your weakness resides. Sophisticated defenders love splinters! They will lead the suit and try to offset your tempo for making the hand. However, many times it is not shortness, **but the degree of fit, that is most important.**

Let's look at two examples where opener again opens 1♠.

Opener (1)	♠ Q9874	♥ KJ2	♦ K107	♣ A6
Opener (2)	♠ KQ1062	♥ AK52	♦ AK7	♣ void

With either hand, opener has no weakness, and if partner splinters, it has little value; a direct splinter bid by his partner will only help the opponents. Is there a better approach to the direct splinter? Yes, and it is called the concealed/ambiguous splinter bids, part of the System of Bergen Raises (a future discussion), and they work as follows:

1♠ - pass - 3♥* is a single jump and 1♥ - pass - 3♠* a double jump in the other major!

The bid must be alerted; it indicates a singleton or void “somewhere” with 13+ Dummy Points and four-card trumps support.

The advantage of the bid is clear; the opponents only know that shortness exists, but not where. Depending on the nature of opener’s hand, opener may not need the shortness information to proceed to game or slam.

When the opener has a need to know about shortness, he uses the relay asking bids: 3NT*, after the bid of 3♠* and the relay bid of 3♠* after 3♥*, the next sequential bid. **The sequential asking bids are called scroll asking bids.** They are asking: where is your singleton or void?

The scroll asking bid and responses follow. If the bidding goes: 1♥ - 3♠*, 3NT* is the scroll ask or 1♠ - 3♥*, 3♠* is the scroll ask. The responses after the 3NT* scroll asks are: 4♣*, 4♦*, 4♠* which shows singletons in clubs, diamonds, or spades, respectively; and the corresponding responses after bidding 3♠* are: 3NT*=♣, 4♣*=♦, and 4♦*=♥, the suit below the singleton (submarine-like bids).

Note: If you do not like the submarine-like bids, one may employ bids that are similar to the heart opening. Then after 1♠ - 3♥*, 3♠* the responses are 4♣*=♣, and 4♦*=♦, and 3NT=♥. In addition, one may substitute the bid of 4♥ to show a spade void after the 3NT ask when one has no slam interest.

All the asking bids and responses must be alerted (*). We will subsequently have more examples when we discuss what I have called modified **scroll bids**, used by responders after opener responds to Jacoby 2NT* to investigate slam or after splinters.

We have shown how one may use 2/1 game force bids, Jacoby 2NT, and Splinters to move toward game in a major. All these techniques are tools to force one to reach the goal of a game or slam in a major suit.

Questions about Splinters

(1) Can you use splinters with 3-card support?

Yes they are called delayed Splinter bids; for example, 1♥-2♦; 2♥-4♣*. You have 13+ dummy points and 3-card support. With delayed splinters, one usually uses a double jump in the suit so that they are not ambiguous!

(2) Can you splinter if the suit is a singleton honor; say an ace or a king?

Yes! Some may not agree but you do after for example a Jacoby 2NT bid and Opener bids his singleton honor.

(3) Can Splinter bids be used over a minor suit opening?

Yes! --- Some say No, Partnership agreement.

(4) How do you show a void?

You can use control bids or Scroll bids, more on this later. In addition, a void may be shown using Blackwood!

(5) When the opponents Splinter, what is the best lead? ----Lead a trump!

(6) Can the opener Splinter ----- Yes these are called Mini-Splinters or a Jump-reverse.

1♣-2♠; then 3♦* by Opener is a Mini-Splinter in support of spades while 2♦ is a reverse (17+ points).

A Mini-Splinter shows 16+ Dummy Points in support of spades in this example.

For a passed hand, it shows invitational values in support of the bid major; for example:
Pass- Pass-1♠ - Pass- 3♦* (Opener)

Rule of 26

When opening one of a major, a splinter bid shows four card support for the major suit bid and 13+ Dummy Points.

When should the opening bidder consider slam?

One may apply the Rule of 26.

Opener merely adds his HCP in his suits outside the known splinter suit and if the total is 26+, you should consider slam in the major suit bid (recall partner has at least 13 Dummy Points).

This rule works because once the partnership can ignore an entire suit, you can expect to make a small slam with only 26+ game points; you do not need 33+ points

LTC Rule or Rule of 24

When opening one of a major, a splinter bid shows four card support for the major suit bid and 13+ Dummy Points. When should you opener consider slam?

One may apply the Rule of 24 or the LTC Rule.

Opener merely assumes 6/7 loses for partner and adds his known losers to 6/7. With 6 losers:

24-6-6=12 and 24-6-7=11. **IN THE SLAM ZONE**

If Opener has 5 losers -- slam is definitely possible! Since 25-5-7=13.

Short Suit Total Rule

When opening one of a major, a splinter bid shows four card support for the major suit bid and usually 13+ Working HCP and a SST=0/1 for partner.

One may apply the SST Rule

**Opener adds his HCP to 13.
With 19-21 HCP then 13-SST = # of tricks possible.**

If the SST in both hands = 2, then we have 11 tricks with a singleton in both hands, with a **void and singleton** 13-(SST=1) =12. **A SLAM**

If the total HCP= 22-24 in both hands, then gains a trick. So, with singletons in both hands 13-(SST=2)+1=12!

Splinter Example with Direct Splinter Bid

West	East
♠KQ832	♠J975
♥9732	♥AKQ4
♦A	♦6
♣AJ	♣KQ64

West has 15 starting points and east has 16 starting points.

West opens 1♥ and with 19 dummy points east bids 4♦* to show 13+ dummy points and a singleton/void in diamonds. Opener next bids 4NT (RKCB 1430) and partner responds 5♣ showing 1/4 keycards. Opener next bids 6♥.

Splinter Example Using Ambiguous Method

West	East
♠KQ832	♠J975
♥9732	♥AKQ4
♦A	♦6
♣AJ	♣KQ64

West has 15 starting points and east has 16 starting points.

West opens 1♥ and with 19 dummy points east bids 3♠* to show 13+ points and four-card support with shortness somewhere. Opener next bids 3NT* (where is it). Hearing 4♣* to show a diamond singleton (using the submarine-like bid), opener next bids 4NT (RKCB 1430). After hearing the bid of 5♣, opener next bids 6♥.

Jacoby and Splinter Bidding Review

Problems from Bergen's Book Pages 114/118 & 174

You open 1♥ and Partner bids 2NT* what is your rebid?

1. ♠A ♥ KJ985 ♦ 964 ♣ A1032
2. ♠982 ♥ AK9865 ♦ void ♣ AK74
3. ♠A3 ♥ KJ852 ♦ A9764 ♣ 3
4. ♠J4 ♥ K9865 ♦ 9 ♣ AK1094
5. ♠Q3 ♥ KJ1053 ♦ 4 ♣ AKQJ6
6. ♠A98 ♥ AJ965 ♦ A109 ♣ 62
7. ♠J83 ♥ KQJ85 ♦ QJ4 ♣ K10
8. ♠K742 ♥ J9762 ♦ KJ ♣ KQ
9. ♠KQ106 ♥ J9842 ♦ AK ♣ 53
10. ♠KJ ♥ AQ10743 ♦ 964 ♣ Q8
11. ♠63 ♥ AQ65432 ♦ A4 ♣ A109

Partner opens 1♥ what is your bid as responder?

12. ♠10 ♥ KJ76 ♦ KQ6 ♣ K8752
13. ♠AQJ3 ♥ Q876 ♦ Q8632 ♣ void
14. ♠KJ98 ♥ 109864 ♦ A ♣ K92

Answers Follow

- (1) Bid 3♠* to show singleton spade
- (2) Bid 3♦* to singleton diamond
- (3) Bid 3♣* to show singleton, do not show diamonds by bidding 4♦ the suit needs to be stronger.
- (4) Bid 4♣*, a strong 5+-card suit.
- (5) Bid 3♦* to conserve bidding space, if you bid 4♣ and responder bids 4♥--- Now What?
- (6) Bid 3NT* with 15 Bergen Points
- (7) Bid 4♥, minimum hand.
- (8) Bid 4♥, minimum hand.
- (9) Bid 3NT*, with 16 Bergen Points
- (10) Bid 4♥, minimal hand.
- (11) Bid 3♥*, 18 Bergen Points good hand
- (12-14) Bid 3♠* for all Concealed/Ambiguous Splinters (Singleton/void somewhere)
Or playing direct splinters 3♠*/4♣*/4♦*