

Jump Shifts – Strong or Weak?

What You Need to Make One

Presented by Mike Savage

Originally all jump shifts were strong – promising at least game going values, usually slam interest. Then came the era of weak two-bids and weak jump-shifts and it seemed like *everyone* was playing them. Nowadays, weak jump-shifts may still be played by the majority of pairs in the USA but there has been a resurgence of experts choosing to play strong jump shifts – “Soloway” Strong Jump Shifts, that is. These jump shifts promise one of three hands: a one-suited hand; a hand with a good fit with partner’s suit plus a decent side suit or a balanced hand (5-3-3-2), intending to bid no-trump on their next turn.

Here are some guidelines as to what hands you should have to make a weak or a strong jump-shift:

Weak Jump-Shifts: (W/O competition)

Purists and bridge theorists mandate that a weak jump-shift by definition shows a hand not strong enough to bid the suit at the cheapest level. Thus 1C-p-2S shows a hand that is not strong enough to bid 1S. Since bidding 1S only requires 6HCP, then ipso-facto: *you must have less!* Something like 2/3-5 HCP with most, if not all, of your points in your suit.

Now if your partner opens, say 1H, a jump shift to 3C or 3D might be made with a few more HCP as you are required to have 10 or more HCP to bid a new suit at the two-level (in this case 2C or 2D). In some partnerships, this issue is addressed by allowing a 2/1 response on a little less than 10 HCP if you rebid the suit on the next round of bidding (if partner doesn’t jump to 3NT or some-such!). For instance: 1S-p-2D-p 2H-p-3D would show a good six or seven-card suit and not much, if anything, more. If your partnership plays Forcing NT over the majors, you can bid 1NT and then bid your suit on the next round with somewhat invitational hands and save the immediate weak-jump shift for hands that are very weak.

In practice, many players sometimes deviate from the straight and narrow with their weak jump-shifts so each partnership should set out their own guidelines for the requirements to make a weak jump-shift. You don’t want to be bidding games and going down (*expecting* more from the weak jump-shifter) nor do you want to not bid makeable games because your partner *has* more than you expected him to have.

Strong Jump Shifts – Soloway Style: (W/O competition)

Soloway jump-shifts show better than opening hands that fall into one of these three categories:

1. A one-suited hand with a good six or longer-card suit, with the intent to rebid it on your next turn.
2. A hand with a suit of your own (usually five-card but could be longer) and a fit for your partner’s suit.
A fit is defined as at least three-card support to an honor (although 4-card support is better) if your partner’s suit is a major and if your partner’s suit is a minor, at least four-card support to an honor.
3. A one-suited hand, usually of 5-cards in length with stopper’s around, intending to bid notrump next. Playing this approach, if you have a two-suited hand and one of your suits isn’t partner’s, no matter *how* big your hand is, you cannot make a jump shift!! You just bid one suit and then bid the other one and apply your points later in the bidding by a slam-invitational raise, Blackwood, a raise to 4NT, etcetera.

A corollary, if playing this method, is that if you make a Soloway strong jump-shift and then bid an new suit on your next call, it is a cue-bid in support of opener’s suit as *you can’t have a 2nd suit and make a Soloway jump-shift*. For instance 1H-p-2S-p 2NT-p-3D: This is an advance cuebid showing a diamond control and promising heart support with strong slam interest – not showing a diamond suit.

Jump Shifts in Competition:

This is purely a partnership decision. They can be played strong, weak or invitational. Some partnerships make a distinction as to the meaning of a jump-shift if they are a passed hand. You chose!