

SPLINTER RESPONSES TO A MINOR OPENING

In the absence of competition, a double jump response in a *major* suit, opposite a *minor* opening, is a splinter bid:

Opener	Responder
1♣/1♦	3♥/3♠

The requirements are:

- Game-going hand
- Singleton in the splinter suit
- Five cards in the unbid major
- Four or more cards in opener's minor
- No ace or king in the other minor

The last requirement could have been reversed, guaranteeing an ace or king in the other minor. Opener needs to know about controls, or lack of controls, in the other minor, for example when choosing between 3NT and five of the minor when he lacks support for responder's major. Also, he may need that information when contemplating a slam in one of the partnership's suits. Since responder should have good cards in the two suits he indicates, we choose to restrict high cards to those two suits, with none outside. Another reason is that weakness in the off suit means more probability that opener will have strength there. If opener plays the hand in responder's major, the lead will come up to that strength instead of through it.

Opener	Responder
1♣	3♥

Responder has ♠AJ1073 ♥4 ♦43 ♣KQ863. If responder were to bid 1♠ instead, and next hand preempts with, say, 4♥, this hand may not get described. The 3♥ splinter bid tells the whole story in one call, before the opponents can interfere, and tells it more accurately than any other sequence. It also has more preemptive value than a 1♠ response. Lastly, it can result in the right-siding of a spade contract, opener perhaps having Kx or AQ in diamonds.

A passed hand cannot make this special splinter bid. All such double jumps by a passed hand are normal preemptive bids.

Double jumps in a *minor* suit are not splinter bids:

Opener	Responder
1♣	3♦ - forcing club raise

See section 3-6, The Forcing Club Raise.

Opener	Responder
1♦	4♣ - normal preemptive bid

These splinter bids do not apply over a takeout double:

South	West	North
1♣/1♦	Dbl	3♥/3♠ - natural, preemptive

After an opposing overcall, however, most double jump takeouts by an unpassed hand are splinters, as are single jumps in an opposing suit. Jumps to game are natural bids. Splinter bids in the fourth suit deny control of the opposing suit. Here are all the possible situations after a simple overcall of a minor opening:

North	East	South
1♣	1♦	3♥/3♠ - splinter, five cards in the other major, no diamond control
1♣	1♥/1♠	4♦ - splinter bid, five cards in the unbid major, no control of RHO's major
1♣/1♦	1♥	3♥ - splinter bid, five spades, no control in the unbid minor
1♣/1♦	1♥	3♠ - natural preemptive bid (since hearts have been bid)
1♣/1♦	1♠	4♥ - natural bid (jump to game)
1♣/1♦	1♠	3♠ - splinter bid, five hearts, no control in the unbid minor
1♦	1♥/1♠	4♣ - splinter bid, five cards in the unbid major, no control of RHO's major
1♣	1♦	3♦ - undefined (diamond void, big club hand?)
1♦	2♣	4♣ - undefined (club void, big diamond hand?)

When opener rebids 4NT after a four-level splinter response, that is natural, to play.

When the Overcall is a Jump

After an opposing jump overcall splinter bids are single jumps, and apply only over a major suit jump overcall at the two level:

South	West	North
1♣	2♥/2♠	4♦ - splinter bid, five cards in the unbid major, no control of RHO's major
1♦	2♥/2♠	4♣ - same
1♦	2♥	4♥ - splinter bid, five spades, no club control

All show five cards in the unbid major. The last sequence shows five spades, singleton heart, good support for opener's suit, no heart control. You can't do the same over a spade jump, because a 4♠ splinter forces the bidding to the five level. When the jump overcall is in a minor, splinter bids do not apply.