



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(86) Splinters

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Level: 3

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General

Splinters are an important part of modern bidding. They communicate a lot of information to partner in just one bid – fit, values, and shortness (ruffing values.) In a traditional auction (responding to Opener) let's remember what our bids show:

- A shift is natural – forcing for at least one round,
- A jump shift is something special, but generally natural – sometimes weak, invitational, strong, fit, etc...
- A double jump shift is a Splinter.

Example

1♠ 2♣ 2/1 Game Forcing
 3♣* Jump Shift (many play this as 3/1 Invitational)
 4♣* Splinter (GF, ♠ support, shortness in ♣)

Splinters in 2/1 Auctions

Once we are in a 2/1 GF auction we know that we do not have the “middle” hand type because both players have already shown an opening hand or better. So in a 2/1 GF auction shifts are natural and jump shifts are splinters.

Example

1♠ 2♣
___?
• 2♦ Natural, 4+♦, unlimited
• 3♦* Splinter, 4+♣, 0-1♦

This is also in line with our ideas that “good hands go slow.” 2♦ is natural and unlimited, so we do not need a natural 3♦ bid. 3♦ is best used as a splinter, showing a fit for partner and shortness. This splinter in a middle of a 2/1 GF auction does not show extra values either (it just shows a hand we are not completely embarrassed to have opened. If your hand is horrible just raise partner.)



Now Responder is left with an excellent picture of Opener's hand and is well placed to find the best game or explore slam.

Responder's Delayed Splinters

Responder can also make a splinter in the middle of a 2/1 auction by making a simple jump shift. If this splinter is in support of 1-suit (Opener bid and rebid the same suit) then it shows not enough trump to make a splinter on the first round of the auction.

Example

1♠ 2♣
2♠ 4♦ 3-card ♠, 0-1♦, good hand for slam - either extra values or decent controls. This is not a hand that you are ashamed of - with that hand just bid 4♠.

If the splinter is in support of Opener's second suit, it shows a fit for that suit.

Example

1♠ 2♣
2♥ 4♦ 4c♥, 0-1♦, good hand for slam – either extra values or decent controls. This is not a hand that you are ashamed of - with that hand just bid 4♥.

Conclusion

Splinters are one of the best tools for bidding slams or for staying out of bad slams. There are many other auctions where we will want to employ splinters to allow us to re-evaluate our hand. In 2/1 GF auctions splinters have the additional advantages of only being a single jump shift. Keep an eye out for an opportunity to make these very descriptive bids.