



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(378) Raising Opener's Major

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Levels: 5 of 10 (2 of 6)

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General

When partner opens the bidding with a Major suit, showing 5+cards, then we have made a lot of progress towards our goal of finding a Major suit fit. If we have 3+cards in partner's Major suit, then we have a fit and our priority is to let partner know that we have a fit (if we can). Because this is such a priority, we dedicate a lot of conventional bids and agreements to these raises. Let's take a look at our options for how to raise Opener's Major!

Constructive Raise (and Limping Raise)

When partner opens the bidding with 1-Major and we raise them to 2-Major this is more than just a simple raise, showing 6-9 points with 3-4 card support. The modern style is to play that this raise shows slightly better values ("constructive values") – a good 7 to a bad 10 points with 3-4 card support.

Example 1

♠ AJ9

♥ 43

♦ KT84

♣ J763

1♠ 2♠

Here we raise to 2♠, letting partner know about our fit and solid values.

With a fit for Opener's Major and a slightly weaker hand, we can make a "limping raise". We limp our way into 2-Major, by going through 1NT Semi-Forcing first and then bidding 2-Major on the second round of the bidding. This limping raise is similar to the way we would bid with 6-9 points and a doubleton in partner's suit. We make a limiting raise with about 5-7 points and a fit for Opener's Major suit.



Example 2

♠ 842
♥ AJ5
♦ 8643
♣ J73
1♥ 1NT*
2♣ 2♥

Here we do not want to raise to 2♥ immediately, as we may encourage them to try for game. But we also do not want to pass partner in 1♥. Thus, we start with 1NT and go to 2♥ on the second round of the bidding. This will slow partner down if they have a good hand, but not an amazing one.

Limit Raises

When we have a fit for our partner's Major suit and invitational values (10 to a bad 12 points) we call this a limit raise. When we have a large trump fit (9+cards), we want partner to accept our game invite aggressively. When we only have an 8-card fit we want partner to accept our invite conservatively. Thus, we differentiate our 4-card limit raises from our 3-card ones.

Example 3

♠ AJ93
♥ 84
♦ KJ73
♣ QT3
1♠ 3♠

With invitational values and 4+card support we simply jump raise partner's Major suit.

Example 4

♠ AJ9
♥ 84
♦ KJ73
♣ QT32
1♠ 1NT*
2♥ 3♠

With only 3-card support we start with 1NT Semi-Forcing, and assuming that partner does not pass, we bid 3♠ on the second round of the bidding. This shows our 3-card limit raise.



Game Forcing Raises

When we have 4+card support and game forcing values we want to establish both the game force and the trump suit on the first round of the bidding. We can do this with either *Jacoby 2NT* or *splinter bids*.

Jacoby 2NT shows 4+card card support for Opener's Major suit and a good 12+ points (almost any shape is possible). A splinter bid is an unusual "double jump shift" that shows minimum game forcing values (about 11 to 14 HCP), 4+card support for partner's Major, and shortness (a singleton or void) in the suit we jump into.

Example 5

♠ A984
♥ KQ83
♦ K52
♣ K3
1♥ 2NT*

We can use Jacoby 2NT with 4+card support for partner's Major suit and a balanced hand with any number of values more than enough for game. We also can use Jacoby 2NT with a big fit, shortness, and too many values to splinter.

Example 6

♠ A43
♥ K943
♦ 7
♣ AJ953
1♥ 4♦*

When partner opens 1♥ we fully describe our hand in one bid by jumping to 4♦, using a splinter. Partner can then decide what to do from there.

Large Fits – "Weak Freak"

When we have 5-card support for partner's Major suit and not a good hand, we want to preempt the bidding. We do so by jumping immediately to 4-Major. This shows 5+card support, about 0-8 HCP, and usually not a balanced hand.

Example 7

♠ K8743
♥ 4
♦ KT93
♣ 532
1♠ 4♠

We jump to game and take away all of the opponents' bidding space. Sometimes this will actually make.



Raising Partner in Competition Table

When partner opens the bidding with 1-Major and RHO comes into the bidding then we have a very different approach to “raising partner”. Here is a summary of our options in these competitive bidding auctions.

<i>Partner opens 1Major - RHO Interferes</i>	vs. X	vs. Overcall	vs. Jump Overcall
Raise	5-9 pts 3-4card support	5-9 pts 3-4card support	Raise to 3-Level: 7 to 11- pts, 3+card support
Jump Raise	0-5 pts 4+card support	0-5 pts 4+card support	(n/a)
Bid Game	0-8 pts (LOTT)	0-8 pts (LOTT)	11+ to 14 pts, 3+card support. Bid to make – “We don’t preempt a preempt.”
Bid 2NT	*10+ pts 4+card support (Jordan)	10+ to 12- pts Natural (0-2card support, stopper in Opp suit.)	10+-12- pts, Natural (0-2card support, stopper in Opp suit.)
Cuebid (Q) Opp’s suit	(n/a)	10+ pts 3+card support (Q=LR+)	<i>Slam Try:</i> 15+ pts, 3+c support.
Jump Q	(n/a)	<i>Splinter</i> , 12+ pts, 4+c support, 0-1card Opp suit.	(Rare)

**LOTT = Law of Total Tricks. This is the idea that we “compete to the size of our fit.” We also try to do this as quickly as possible – we jump there. With a 10 card fit (5-card support for partner’s Major) we raise to 4M even if we do not have a great hand.*

Advanced Issue

Double jump shifts in competition are also bids that can show support. If these double jump shifts are below game they are splinters, but if they are jumps to game they are to play.

Example 8

1♠ 2♣ 4♦ *Splinter*, 12+ pts, 4+card ♠, 0-1 ♦

Example 9

1♠ 2♣ 4♥ Natural, To Play. 7+card ♥, 0-9 HCP



Conclusion

Finding a Major suit fit is our most important job as Responder. When partner opens the bidding with a Major suit, raising is one of our most common and effective bidding tools. We need to have a way to show a large number of different size fits and strengths, which is why we have so many different ways to raise partner. Make sure that you are comfortable with your raising options in constructive bidding as well as in competitive bidding.