



# Adventures in Bridge

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## *This Week in Bridge*

### **(341) Strong Unbalanced 2-Suited Opening Hands**

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Level: 4 of 10 (1 of 6)

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#### **General**

When we have a strong 2-suited hand, we will either make a *Jump Shift* or *Reverse* to describe our hand to partner. When we have a “normal” valued hand (small or medium) it is easier to describe hands with equal length suits or a longer higher-ranking suit. We bid the higher-ranking suit first and then the lower-ranking one later. But if we have a small or medium strength hand with our longest suit being our lower-ranking one, then we have the problem of trying to describe the hand without jump shifting or reversing. With a strong hand (large or extra large) we have the opposite problem. Hands with equal length or higher-ranking longer suit must use a jump shift to the 3-level to show their values on the second round of the bidding. This eats up a lot of valuable bidding space. By contrast, with hands that have a longer lower-ranking suit, we are able to show our values at the 2-level by either making a reverse or a 2-level jump shift. Let’s take a look at these hands in more detail and see how we describe them to partner.

#### **Longer Higher-Ranking Suit or Equal Length Suits (“Normal” Shape) – L or XL**

When we have a hand with a good 18+points, we open the bidding at the 1-level, and partner responds at the 1-level (usually showing about 6+points), we have enough combined values to give game a try. By making a strong jump shift, we show those values and create a game forcing auction.

##### *Example 1*

1♠    1NT  
3♥

##### *Example 2*

1♦    1♠  
3♣



Though our second bid communicates the values of our hand, it eats up much of our bidding space and still leaves a large variety of distributions possible.

5-4

5-5

6-4

6-5...

We attempt to further describe our hand later in the bidding.

*Example 3*

♠ AK643

♥ KQJT8

♦ AQ

♣ 5

1♠ 1NT\*

3♥ 3NT

\_\_\_?

Here we bid 4♥ to show our second 5-card Major ♥.

*Example 4*

♠ AK752

♥ 6

♦ K4

♣ KQJT9

1♠ 1NT\*

3♣ 3NT

\_\_\_?

Here we pass, letting partner give 3NT a try.

After we open 1-Major and make a strong jump shift, we do not expect partner to have 3-card support (or more) for our primary suit (they likely would have raised with 3-card support, or they will let us know by making a slam try later). Thus, if partner takes a “preference” to our Major after our jump shift, then they generally are showing a doubleton (“tolerance” for our suit). If partner bypasses our suit, that generally shows shortness (a singleton or void).



*Example 5*

♠ AKJ963

♥ 4

♦ K3

♣ AK83

1♠     1NT\*

3♣     3♥

3♠!    4♠

Pass

Here when partner bids 3♥, we have a choice of bidding 3NT or 3♠. It is best to bid 3♠, showing our 6<sup>th</sup> ♠ and leave partner room to bid 3NT if they have very little support for ♠. They could still have 2-card ♠ support (and long ♥) in this auction. Partner's raise to 4♠ confirms that they had some ♠ support.

*Example 6*

♠ AJ9653

♥ 4

♦ AK

♣ AK83

1♠     1NT

3♣     3NT

\_\_\_?

Here partner has strongly implied a singleton or void in ♠, since they did not bid 3♠. With this hand we pass 3NT and let partner play there.

**Longer Lower Ranking Suit ("Reverse" Shape)**

When we have a strong hand with a distribution where our longest suit is lower-ranking than our second suit, the way we show our hand will depend on how partner responds. If after partner responds, our suit is available to bid at the 1-level then we bid it there with a small- or medium-valued hand (12-17 points) and make a jump shift into our second suit at the 2-level with a large- or extra-large-valued hand (18-21 points). Though this is a jump, it still eats up less bidding space than the jump shift that goes to the 3-level. Additionally, our possible distributions are fewer because partner knows our long suit is lower-ranking (4-5, 4-6, 5-6, etc.. ).

*Example 7*

♠ AKJ3

♥ AJ7

♦ 4

♣ KQJ83

1♣     1♦

\_\_\_?

Here we jump to 2♠ with 19 HCP, showing game forcing values, an unbalanced hand, and 4-card ♠ suit.



*Example 8*

♠ KQT93

♥ 7

♦ A

♣ AKJ863

1♣      1♥

\_\_\_?

We make a jump shift to 2♠ with this distributional 17 HCP and lots of length points. We rebid ♠ again later to show that we have 5-6 distribution.

If partner responds in a suit that is higher-ranking than our second suit (or bids NT) then we no longer have the ability to bid our suit at the 1-level (“normal” rebid) or 2-level (a jump shift). Now, if we bid our second suit it will be at the 2-level and that will be a reverse, showing a strong hand (forcing for 1-round) even without jumping. This bid shows values (about 17+ points) and distribution (longer lower-ranking suit), even though our rebid was not a jump and was at the 2-level.

*Example 9*

♠ 4

♥ AKJ7

♦ Q43

♣ AK762

1♣      1♠

\_\_\_?

Here we reverse into 2♥, showing our shape (at least 4-5) and strength (17+ points).

*Example 10*

♠ A5

♥ 9

♦ A873

♣ AKJ763

1♣      1♥

\_\_\_?

Here we reverse into 2♦ with only 16 HCP, but with extra distribution, lots of Aces, and excellent ♦.

A reverse is generally forcing to at least the 3-Level of Opener’s first-bid suit, though we will normally end up going all the way to game unless the Responder has an absolute minimum hand for their first response.



## Conclusion

When we have a strong 2-suited hand, we need to communicate to partner both of our suits, our strength, and our distribution. In order to show our strength, we must jump shift (when we have equal length or a longer higher-ranking suit) and this can leave us little bidding space to pattern out while keeping the auction below 3NT. Strong hands with longer lower-ranking suits are easier to describe (jump shift at 2-level or reverse), allowing us to more easily bid out our pattern while keeping the auction below 3NT. Make sure that you get these monster hands right, because it is very sad to play in the wrong contract when you hold such a beautiful hand.