

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION: THE SPLINTER BID

We know that to make game in a major, you need 26 points (including distribution); but to make a small slam, you need approximately 33 points. But how often have you bid only to game and made 6? You turn to partner and say: "The hands just fit really well together. We couldn't have bid it, we didn't have enough points."

So here's a special convention designed to help you get to a small slam with maybe only 26 points if you have "magic" in the other suits. It's called the "Splinter Bid".

But first we must fully understand a basic concept: If you have $\spadesuit 432$ in declarer's hand, you may be about to lose three tricks right off the bat in \spadesuit . But if your $\spadesuit 432$ is located opposite $\heartsuit 5$ (singleton) in dummy, let's call that "magic", if you are playing in a trump suit contract. Presto, you can no longer lose more than one trick in that suit, provided that dummy has some trumps. Note that if your singleton is located opposite KJx, this is NOT good. It is called "wasted values"

Enter the Splinter Bid: Requirements for a Splinter Bid by Responder to the Opener:

13-15 points (including distribution)

A singleton or void in a side suit (Singleton may not be an ace or a king)
4 or more trumps.

Responder makes a double jump in the suit in which he has a singleton or a void:

e.g.

1H - 4C or 1S - 4D or 1H - 3S.

Let's see this in the context of a full deal:

S 1098
H AQJ6
D 76
C J1098

S A7632
H 875
D AQ5
C K2

S KQ54
H 4
D K432
C A543

S J
H K10932
D J1098
C Q76

Auction:
1S - 4H
4N - 5S*
6S

*5S shows 2 key cards + Queen of Spades)

But if opener had this hand

S A7632	S KQ54
H KJ5	H 4
D A65	D K432
C Q2	C A543

The auction on the above hand would go

1S - 4H
4S - Pass

In the hand on the left (in the box above), in the combined hands, you only have 25 HCP but you can make 6S. Dummy's singleton H is a key feature opposite your three small H's. Declarer's hand is now so much better. Declarer knows from the auction that she cannot lose more than one trick in that suit and knows that partner's Aces and Kings are all located in the other suits where they will do the most good. This is called: "no wasted values". (Some call it "no wastage".)

In the hand on the right (in the box above):

26 H.C.P. And no hope for slam. Alas! The singleton H in dummy lies opposite declarer's H KJx. Some less experienced players may say: "So what? I can trump those H in dummy." Yes, but note that those 4 points are now not being used to take tricks. (The trumps are taking the tricks, not the high cards.) One of the honours will be captured by the opponent's higher honor and you will trump the other honor. (By the way, North leads the S10, not the H Ace as he is a not a friend or relative!)

The auction on the above hand would go

1S - 4H
4S - Pass

Trumping those high cards is the equivalent of taking 4 high card points and throwing them into the garbage. Your 26 HCP suddenly became a measly 22 and now you can only make game.

Therefore, anytime that you find that partner has a singleton or void opposite your xxx or your xxxx or Axx or Axxx, this constitutes magic. Get excited and consider slam possibilities even without the traditional 33 points.

Reminders:

You must have 4 card support in order to splinter. With only three trumps in dummy, opponents may lead trumps on the go and again when they get on lead, now you cannot ruff all your losers. We have lied to you all these years and told you that 8 trumps is to die for. In reality, eight is fine but nine's devine!!

A Splinter by Responder shows exactly 13-15 points including distribution. Unlike Jacoby 2NT where Responder has 13 or more points: Unlimited points.

We do not splinter if our singleton is an Ace or a King.

Note that this is UNLIKE Jacoby 2NT where Opener can show a singleton even if it is an Ace or a King.

Splinter bids are not designed to help you to get to game. With 26 points, you were always getting to game. It is all about attempting to get to slam even with not very many points.

Splinter bids can also be done by OPENER.

1D - 1S

4H shows 19 or more points, 4 card Spade support and a singleton or void in Hearts. (Responder may have only had 6 points, hence Opener must have 19 or more points in order to insist on game.)

Location, location, location. How do these hands fit together? Location of your short suit and high card points. Watch for magic and get to these wonderful slams!

Now, do the quiz at bottom of newsletter!

BARBARA'S BRIDGE TIP
This Is A Quiz!

1. The bidding goes Pass-Pass to you. What will you bid?

You hold:

S A1098
H A109
D KQJ9
C 109

- a) 1D
- b) 1S
- c) 1NT

2. The bidding goes 1C by RHO. You overcall 1S. Pass by LHO and partner raises to 2S. 3C by RHO. What will you bid with this hand?

S AQ10965
H A4
D KQ2
C 96

- a) 4C
- b) 3S
- c) 4S
- d) 3D

3. 1S by partner. Pass by RHO. 2S by you. Pass by LHO. Partner now bids 3D. Pass by RHO. What will you bid with your hand?

S Q104
H 9873
D 6
C A10952

- a) 3S
- b) 4S
- c) 3NT

4. You are the Dealer. What will you bid with this hand in first seat? Not vulnerable. Opponents also not vulnerable.

S Q62
H Q865432
D ----
C A84

- a) Pass
- b) 2H
- c) 3H

5. 3C by you with the hand below. Pass by LHO. Partner bids 3H. What will you now bid?

S KQ5
H 7
D 52
C KJ109854

- a) 3NT
- b) 3S
- c) 4C
- d) Pass

ANSWERS:

1. Open 1NT. You have lots of 10's and 9's. This hand feels like 15 HCP. Just go for it. Also, open 1NT with 14 HCP and a 5 or 6 card minor suit, preferably with both majors stopped.

2. 4S. You have 17 points including 2 points for length. When partner raises your suit, you now get an additional one point for the 5th card which has been supported and two extra points for each remaining card. You are now at 20 points. Partner has promised at least 6 points so just bid game.

3. Bid 4S. 3D is a Help Suit Game Try. You should study these and discuss with your partner. SPADES are going to be trumps because you and partner have bid and raised Spades. Partner now wants to know if you have help for her in Diamonds. You and partner need to agree on what type of Help Suit Game Trys you are playing. Alex and I prefer to use these when we have three or four small cards in the problem suit or Qxx or Qxxx. The fact that you can assist with the battle of NOT losing three Diamond tricks quickly on this hand (because you have a singleton) is a reason to accept partner's invitation and bid 4S, even if you had three small Spades.

4. Pass. In first or second seat, you should be a bit more disciplined. If you were not vulnerable and opponents were vulnerable, there is something to be said for opening 3H.

5. 3S. Partner's 3H bid is forcing. Normally, if you like her suit (have 3 card support) , you raise to 4H. And if you don't like her suit, you rebid your own suit. BUT when you have a solid stopper in the other major, bid the major, in case Responder can now bid 3NT. Responder knows you cannot have four Spades as your preempt says you have 7 cards in the minor and you do NOT have a 4-card or longer major. Your 3S bid only shows a stopper in Spades.