

Jacoby and Bergen Raises

When we talk about having a fit, we are thinking of the 8-card fit, 4-4 or 5-3 commonly, but a 9-card fit is safer and also more powerful, and Jacoby and Bergen raises are based on 4-card support for the opening bid of 1H or 1S. There are a few versions of both of these conventions, but a simple adaptation of each is as follows:

Bergen Raises

1. After 1S by Partner:

2S shows 5-9 and 3-card support;

2NT (Jacoby) shows 4-card support and is forcing to game;

3C shows 7-9 and 4-card support;

3D shows 10-12 and 4-card support;

3S shows 2-6 and 4-card support;

3NT shows 12-15 and 3-card support and balanced, opener may pass or cue-bid or bid 4S;

4C, 4D and 4H shows 10-12 and 4-card support, with a singleton in the suit bid;

4S shows 5-card support and less than 10 HCPs.

2. After 1H by Partner:

2H shows 5-9 and 3-card support;

2NT (Jacoby) shows 4-card support and is forcing to game;

3C shows 7-9 and 4-card support;

3D shows 10-12 and 4-card support;

3H shows 2-6 and 4-card support;

3NT shows 12-15 and 3-card support and balanced, opener may pass or cue-bid or bid 4H;

3S, 4C and 4D shows 10-12 and 4-card support, with a singleton in the suit bid;

4H shows 5-card support and less than 10 HCPs.

3. What if you have 10-12 and 3-card support?

If you are playing a forcing 1NT response, then simply bid 1NT and jump in opener's major on the next round.

If 1NT would not be forcing, bid a new suit, showing at least 4, and jump in opener's major on the next round.

If you have already passed, be careful as a new suit is no longer forcing, so take your pick, but this is when a forcing 1NT response, even as a passed hand, comes in very handy.

4. Do I count points for distribution?

This is by agreement, but I would suggest not, except when you are at the top of the range for a bid with an outside singleton (ignore any outside doubleton).

If you have 6HCPs and a singleton, then treat it as 7-9 and bid 3C, likewise with 9HCPs and a singleton, bid 3D.

Jacoby Raises

There are many ways to rebid after partner responds a Jacoby 2NT to your major suit opening bid, but simple is often best to minimise confusion. I suggest the following:

1. After partner opens 1S and you respond 2NT:

3C/3D/3H shows a singleton in the suit bid (strength 12+);

3S shows a good hand for spades without a singleton (not 15-17);

3NT shows 15-17 without a singleton, and of course is forcing;

4C/4D/4H shows a good second suit;

4S shows 12 -14 without a singleton.

2. After partner opens 1H and you respond 2NT:

3C/3D/3S shows a singleton in the suit bid (strength 12+);

3H shows a good hand for hearts without a singleton (not 15-17);

3NT shows 15-17 without a singleton, and of course is forcing;

4C/4D/4S shows a good second suit;

4H shows 12 -14 without a singleton.

After your response, if partner bids game in the major that is a sign-off, but having thus far just shown your singleton, if you have a good hand you may move on, but bear in mind that your singleton may not suit partner's hand at all.

After you show your singleton if partner bids a new suit, that is their cheapest cue-bid (first or maybe second-round control as per your agreement), and you are expected to cue-bid in return, by-passing a suit shows no Ace of King in that suit.

After you show your singleton, if partner bids the major at the 3-level, that is inviting you to cue-bid the cheapest cue-bid (first or maybe second-round control as per your agreement), by-passing a suit shows no Ace of King in that suit. Partner will return the cue-bid, or sign off in game in the major if your cue-bid does not suit, or bid 4NT to check up on Key Cards.

Bidding in Competition

If you overcall a major suit, Jacoby and Bergen do not apply, and a jump in a new suit is generally taken as a splinter with support for the major, and a cue-bid as at least a Limit Raise in support of the major.

If your partner opens 1H/1S and next player overcalls or doubles, generally if you can still make your Bergen response, then it will have the same meaning. Thus after a double, system is on, or 1S over 1H, but over a 2D overcall, system is off as 3C is no longer a jump bid, but 3H/3S would still apply. If the overcall is 2C then 3D by responder could still be 10-12 with 4-card support. Instead of Jacoby, a cue-bid could be at least a Limit Raise with 3-card support and 2NT 4-card support.

Transfers When We Open 1NT or 2NT

When we open a strong 2NT (or rebid 2NT after opening 2C) it will normally be an advantage if the strong hand is declarer, and this can be accomplished if the responder uses transfer bids to get to the final contract. The same is true after an opening bid of 1NT, but with more room available, the other advantage is the ability to give the opener a better description of the responder's hand pattern. The weaker the responding hand the more advantage can be gained by transferring to your long suit and passing, especially if it is at least 6 cards, so a minimum 6-2 fit is assured.

There are many transferal systems in use in the Bridge world, and some are very effective, but complicated, and complications can breed mistakes, so I will outline a relatively simple transferal system. The basic principle I generally follow with a very weak hand is to always transfer to a 5-card major or a 6-card minor.

1NT Opening

The first rule is to bid the suit below the one that you want to transfer to, and this suit should be at least 5 cards in length. If you have less than 8 HCPs you now pass. If you have 8 or 9 HCPs you invite 3NT by rebidding 2NT, or with a 6-card major raise it to the 3-level. If you have a good 9 (or more) HCPs and balanced, rebid 3NT with a 5-card suit or 4 of the major with a 6-card suit. If you have 5 hearts and 4 spades, and 8 or 9 HCPs, transfer to hearts and rebid 2S, which opener can pass, or bid 2NT or 3H to play with a minimum, or pick a game with a maximum. If you have 8 or 9 HCPs and no major, bid 2NT to invite 3NT.

If you have a good 9 (or more) HCPs and unbalanced, bid your second suit, indicating an outside singleton or void. Holding at least 9 HCPs and 5-5 in the majors, transfer to spades and rebid 4H.

If you have a 6-card major and slam interest, bid 4D with hearts and 4H with spades. A jump to 4C is normally played as Gerber for Aces. You can also bid 4S with 6+ clubs and slam interest and 5C with diamonds. If you want to forgo Gerber, then drop the transfer levels down 1, thus 4C=H, 4D=S, 4H=C and 4S=D, then with no slam interest and a 6-card minor you can just bid the minor at the 5-level. Opener can bid 4NT, RKCB if they are interested in slam instead of signing off in the suit shown.

An interesting hand came up at the club that could have been solved using transfers: You hold: void, QJxx, Txx, AKJTxx and partner opens 1NT (15-17)? If you bid 2C and partner responds 2H you are happy, but if partner responds 2S, which seems much more likely, you have to guess. Much better is to bid 2S as a transfer to clubs, then after partner takes the transfer you next bid 3H, which shows an unbalanced hand and likely short spades, so if partner rebids 3NT you can pass with some misgivings. As it turns out partner has both majors and raises to 4H which allows you to bid the slam, and even the grand slam if you are playing Voidwood, here 5S.

2NT Opening (or rebid after opening 2C)

The same transfers to the majors apply, but transfer to the minors has too little room for full description, so less definition is available, except at the 4-level as for the 1NT opening, where you can show slam interest by transfers, or for the minors, jump to game with no slam interest.

If you have 5-5 in the minors, a 3S response to 2NT opening often has no specific meaning and therefore can be conveniently played for this type of hand.

They Open 1NT

When your RHO opens 1NT you know that your side has at most 2/3 of the HCPs and you will need some shape to enter into the affray because LHO may be waiting for you. However if it is your LHO that opens 1NT and it is passed around to you, you are better placed as your side still has at most 2/3 of the HCPs, but should have at least 16 between you, since the responder has passed.

There are many systems for acting over an opposing 1NT, all with something going for them, but safety requires a very good or shapely hand. If by chance you have a completely balanced hand with more HCPs than the opener, you could double for penalties unless you are playing one of the systems whereby that shows a single-suiter. Even with more points than the opener you may not beat 1NTX unless you have a source of tricks in 1 or 2 suits and a safe lead.

I have summarized 3 popular conventions:

Multi-Landy (Modified Cappelletti)

- With both majors (at least 5/4) overcall 2C. - Partner could pass with at least 6 clubs and short majors, but normally bids their best major (at the 3-level with a good hand) or bids 2D with no preference and overcaller bids their 5-card suit.
- With any single suiter (at least 6), bid 2D. – Partner bids 2H to find out overcaller’s suit, or bids a single suit of their own.
- Alternatively, with a single suited major, bid 2D. – Partner bids 2H, pass or correct, or 2S if they prefer hearts and are strong enough to go to the 3-level.
- With a major and a minor (at least 5/4) bid the major. – Partner passes, invites game, or bids 2NT to find the minor suit which may be passed or then partner could bid their own suit (at least 6). With a weak hand and both minors partner bids 3C and overcaller passes or corrects to 3D.
- With both minors (at least 5/5) bid 2NT. – Partner bids 3C/3D to play or 3H/3S (at least 6) to play.
- With a good hand and a 6-card suit, bid it at the 3-level. - Partner passes or raises.
- Double is for penalties. – Partner passes unless they have a 5-card suit (or longer) and a very weak hand.

Brozel

- With clubs and hearts (at least 5/4), bid 2C. - Partner chooses, invites or bids their own suit to play.
- With diamonds and hearts (at least 5/4), bid 2D. - Partner chooses, invites or bids their own suit to play.
- With spades and hearts (at least 5/4), bid 2H. - Partner chooses, invites or bids their own suit to play.
- With spades and a minor (at least 5/4), bid 2S. - Partner chooses, invites, or bids their own suit to play, and bids 2NT to ask for the minor.
- With both minors (preferably 5/5) bid 2NT. - Partner chooses or bids their own suit to play.

- With a single suiter (at least 6) double. – Partner bids 2C, correctible or any other suit to play.
- With 5440 or 4441 bid the short suit at the 3-level.

DONT - Disturb Opponents NoTrump

- With Clubs and a higher suit bid 2C. - Partner passes or bids 2D to ask for the other suit, 2H/2S/2NT is to play.
- With Diamonds and a higher suit bid 2D. - Partner passes or bids 2H/2S/3C to play.
- With Hearts and Spades, bid 2H. - Partner passes or bids 2S to play and 2NT shows both minors.
- With a weakish Spade suit (at least 6) bid 2S
- With a single-suiter (at least 6) double. Partner bids 2C to ask for the suit or bids a 6-card suit of their own.

Last Hand Bidding

If 1NT is opened on your left and passed around to you, it is a little safer to get involved, as since the responder (RHO) made no attempt to get to game, your side is likely to have a minimum of 16 HCPs. The previous 3 systems can still be used in the pass-out seat, except it is not normally a good idea to double for penalties as partner will not know which suit to lead. Thus double could still be used to show a single-suiter, or if you usually play it for penalties, double shows general values which partner can pass with a good lead of their own.

Strong 2C

When partner opens with a strong 2C, it is normally good practice to let them describe their hand before introducing a weak suit of your own, thus respond 2D, unless you have something important to say.

If partner rebids 2NT (generally 22-23 HCPs), then transfers will apply as if they opened 2NT, but if you are really bad (4HCPs or less) you can pass, or transfer to a 5-card (or longer major) and then pass. Otherwise this should be forcing to game.

If partner rebids a suit (even 3D), then this should either be forcing to game, or at least one more round of bidding. Holding 3 or more cards in partner's 2H or 2S rebid, bid to game with a poor hand, or just raise to the 3-level with something extra. Without 3-card or longer support for the major and some values, bid a new suit, encouraging partner to bid 3NT or show another suit with a highly distributional hand.

If partner jump rebids a suit (even 4C or 4D), this should be forcing to game and show a self-supporting suit, asking for a cue-bid of first or second round control in another suit. A simple raise denies the ability to cue-bid.

To make a positive response to 2C (anything but 2D), the suit should be robust, of at least 5-cards, and the hand should have an Ace and a King, or two KQs. To respond 3C or 3D, which is slightly preemptive on Opener, the suit should be 6-cards, something like AKJ9xx, and a few outside values. A 2NT response to 2C is a positive response without a robust 5-card suit.

A jump response to a 2C opening (3H, 3S, 4C or 4D) shows a self-supporting long suit and invites cue-bids from Opener.

Partner opens 2C, responder holds:

AKT9x, Qx, xxx, xxx – Just worth a 2S response (also if 5-card suit is hearts)

ATxxx, KQx, xxx, xx – Suit not robust enough, but 2NT okay.

ATxxxx, QJx, xx, xx – Not strong enough for a positive response, bid 2D now and await Opener's rebid. Transfer to spades and bid 4S if Opener rebids 2NT.

xx, xx, QJx, AKJ9xx – Worth a 3C response, or 3D if minor suits swapped.

xxx, xx, QJx, AKxxx – Suit not robust enough for 3C (or 3D), but 2NT okay.

xx, xx, xxxx, xxxxx – Respond 2D, and pass Opener's non-jump rebid.

AKQJxxx, xx, xx, xx – Respond 3S, setting spades as trumps and asking for cue-bids (likewise with hearts).

xx, xx, xx, AKQJxxx – Respond 4C setting clubs as trumps and asking for cue-bids (likewise with diamonds).

xx, AKxxx, x, QJTxx – respond 2H and rebid 3C over 2S or 2NT rebid.

Doubles

A double is a very useful call in a competitive auction, with a number of different meanings, depending on the bidding until then.

Take-out Doubles:

If the opposition opens the bidding and you or your partner doubles, this will generally be a take-out bid, asking for their partner to bid another suit, and the level of the response will depend on the strength of the responder's hand. The doubler should generally have at least 3 cards in every other suit (at least 4-4 if there are only 2 other suits) and an opening hand, a good 5+ outside suit and 16+ HCPs, or a hand too strong to overcall 1NT initially (18-19HCPs). Typical responses are as follows:

Non-jump response will tend to show the suit bid and 0-7 HCPs, unless the RHO makes a bid and then it will be a free-bid and show 5-7 HCPs.

- Jump response shows 4+ cards in the suit bid and 8-10 HCPs.
- Double-jump response shows 5+ in the suit bid and is forcing to game.
- Cue-bid shows 11+ and asks opener to describe their hand, and will generally show at least one 4-card major, both if the opened suit was a minor.
- 1NT shows 7-10-, a stopper in the opened suit and generally no outside major suit.
- 2NT shows 10+ -12, a stopper in the opened suit and generally no outside major suit.
- 3NT shows 13+, a stopper in the opened suit and generally no outside major suit.

An exception to the above definition of a hand suitable for a take-out double occurs when the opponents are using transfer responses to a 1C opening. Then double shows the suit bid as a transfer, and cue-bidding the suit shown by the transfer is for take-out.

Negative Doubles:

Negative doubles generally apply when your partner opens the bidding, the next hand overcalls a suit, and it is your turn to call. If you double you are generally showing the other two suits, and if a major has already been bid you are definitely showing the other major. If you could have bid this major at the 1-level, you are showing exactly 4 cards by the double, but if spades were overcalled, you have either only 4 hearts, or less than the required 10 HCPs to freely bid 2H.

The more interesting auction occurs after partner opens 1C and your RHO overcalls 1D. If you now double, you are showing at least 4-4 in the majors, and maybe even 5-4 either way. Conversely if you respond 1H or 1S, you are showing a minimum of a 4-card suit and denying the other major. An exception would be if you hold 6-4 in the majors, it is generally better to bid the 6-card suit first, especially if it is hearts and you are strong, as you can reverse with spades later.

Support Doubles:

Support doubles are made by opener after partner responds in a major suit, RHO overcalls, and you have 3-card support. A direct raise shows 4-card support, so a double after the overcall shows 3-card support, and any other call denies even 3-card support. If RHO doubles rather than overcalls, then redouble shows the 3-card support for partner.

Useful Tips - Some tips you may find useful relating to bidding and declarer play.

To Open or Pass?

When you have a possible sub-minimum hand for an opening bid, before opening the bidding in 1st or 2nd seat, decide what your rebid is going to be when your partner makes a response. Consider the following possible opening hands:

AJTxxx, x, AJx, JTx – Open 1S and rebid 2S – Only 11 HCPs, but 2 Aces, a couple of useful Tens and an easy rebid over virtually any response is better than a weak two. Likewise any similar hand with another 6-card suit.

Axxxx, J, AJx, Jxx – 2S or pass if not opening weak twos – 11 HCPs and 2 Aces but a poor suit and no pips makes the 2-level rebid risky and may mislead partner.

AJTxx, AJxx, JTx, x – Open 1S and rebid 2H – Only 11 HCPs, but 2 Aces, useful Tens and an easy rebid over virtually any response (Can consider passing 1NT response).

AJTxx, x, JTx, AJxx - Pass – 11 HCPs and 2 Aces but a 2D or 2H response will make a rebid difficult or at least misleading.

AJTxx, xx, JTx, AJx - Pass – 11 HCPs and 2 Aces but any response except 1NT will make a rebid difficult or at least misleading.

KJxxx, x, Qxx, KQxx – Pass – 11 HCPs, but no Aces, makes this a sub-minimum opening, for 1st or 2nd seat, but okay for 3rd and 4th seat (satisfies Rule of 15 for 4th seat). Swap the majors around and pass in 4th seat also.

Axxxx, KQxx, Qxx, x – Open 1S and rebid 2H – 11 HCPs, 1 Ace and 4 hearts, makes this a minimum opening, but not if the other 4-card suit is a minor.

When to Draw Trumps

When playing in a suit contract, as soon as dummy tracks, your first consideration should be when to draw trumps. Consider the following question: “Do I want to use any of dummy’s trumps to ruff a short suit in dummy?”

QJx	AKxxx
QJx	Kxx
Axx	x
xxxx	AKxx

In a 4S contract, declarer has the shortage and dummy is balanced, so win the DA at trick 1 and draw trumps, expecting to lose a club and a heart. It would be a mistake to win the DA and ruff a diamond at trick 2, as the hand with the long trumps should normally only ruff if forced to by the defence.

QJx	AKxxx
Qxxx	Kxx
Axxx	Kx
xx	xxx

In a 3S contract, declarer has 5 losers if trumps are drawn, thus the 9th trick has to come from a club ruff in dummy. This is not the time to draw trumps, so win the DA at trick 1 and lead a club. Win the spade switch in dummy and lead another club. The DK will allow declarer to ruff the 3rd club and draw trumps, losing 2 clubs and probably 2 hearts.

Consider Whether to Play your Lowest Trump as Declarer

When you have a long trump suit, and either ruff in hand early in the play, or play a high trump from dummy, it is natural to play your lowest trump. Over many years of playing bridge there have been quite a few times when I later wished I had kept my lowest trump.

KQ9xx	J42
xxx	Qx
Axx	xxxx
xx	AKQx

On the above hand after a 1NT (12-14) opening and a transfer sequence I was in 2S as East and the opening lead was the DK, which I won in dummy. It would normally be good practice to lead a trump towards KQ9xx in dummy and I wanted to set up a heart ruff in my hand, so I led a small heart off the table. North rose with the HK and cashed the HA and followed with the HJ.

I had no inclination there was any danger and was just about to ruff with the S2 when I thought that my next move would be to lead the S4 towards dummy, so I may as well ruff with the S4 now and then lead the S2. To my surprise South discarded! As well as a doubleton heart, South had a doubleton spade, precisely the A3.

Teams	QJ63			
Bd 4	6			
Dir W	K752			
Vul All	9832			
65		T9742		
Q		7543		
QT8		A94		
AKJT654		Q		
	AK			
	AKJT982			
	J63			
	7			
W	N	E	S	
1C	/	1S	4H	
//				

The adjacent hand featured in one of Tony Jackman's Saturday Courier Mail columns and I am sure most (all?) declarers would make the mistake of ruffing the club at trick 2 with the H2, but with such a good suit, it is perfectly safe to ruff with the H8 to keep all options open.

Looking at the NS hands alone, after cashing the trumps and unblocking the spades there will be 11 tricks if the DA is on side, and only 9 tricks otherwise. When East proves to have only 1 club and 4 hearts, there is a sure-fire way to make just 10 tricks, as long as declarer still has the H2!

When West plays the HQ at trick 3, cash 2 more hearts, then the SA and SK and finally exit with the H2! East gets a surprizetrick, but must then give you the DK in dummy and the SQ takes care of the other diamond.

Cashing a Long Suit at Notrumps

When playing in any level of Notrumps, if you have a strong long suit, consider cashing out the suit, especially when dummy and declarer's hand have the same number of cards in the suit. Thus you will not have to discard from either hand, but the defenders will have to discard a number of times. If one defender has controls in a number of suits, they may be squeezed and thus forced to let go a control, or discard one of their long suit.

For example, in 3NT you may have a 5-5 solid club fit and after winning the 3rd round of spades, you know from the bidding that one opponent has 2 more spades to cash if you lose the lead, but also that the same opponent is likely to have the HQ and DK that you are missing. Since you have to finesse into the unsafe hand for either card, the probable losing finesse will see you 1 off.

If you run your clubs, the hand with the spades will likely have to find 4 discards, and to keep the HQ and DK protected, will have to discard a spade, thus you can take

the finesse with safety. If a spade is not discarded, cash your top tricks and hope they have been squeezed.