

Splinter Bids

(Friday mini-lesson – 17 January 2020)

A Splinter Bid is a convention whereby a **double-jump bid in a side-suit** indicates a trump fit and a singleton or void in the suit bid. It can be made by either the opener or the responder. It can be made on **any** round of the bidding.

Here are some common examples:

	<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder</i>
Example A	1♠	4♦*
Example B	1♦ 4♣*	1♥
Example C	1♣ 1♠	1♥ 4♦*

In each auction, the final bid shown (with the asterisk) is a Splinter Bid.

What Does a Splinter Bid Show?

It shows:

1. shortness (void or singleton) in the suit bid;
2. support (at least 4-cards) for the previous bid suit;
3. enough values for game.

Sample hands for the Splinter Bidder:

Example hand A: ♠ Q J 7 6 ♥ A 7 3 ♦ 2 ♣ K J 8 7 6

Example hand B: ♠ K J 4 ♥ A Q J 3 ♦ A Q J 5 4 ♣ 3

Example hand C: ♠ K T 7 6 ♥ A Q J 7 6 4 ♦ - ♣ Q 4 3

What strength is shown by a splinter bid? It depends on the auction. The Splinter Bidder shows enough for game, but not enough to clearly look for slam. **He is interested in slam if partner has the right “magical” hand.**

In auction A, it shows approximately 11-15 in support (counting shape). With more (or less), responder should choose some other auction.

On B, since opener is insisting on game opposite a possible 6-count, it shows something in the 17-20 (counting shape) range.

On C, it shows about opening bid strength (similar to “A”).

Don't get too concerned with memorizing the exact ranges. The best summary would be: “Enough for game, and interest in slam opposite the right hand.”

How Splinter Bids Help

Opposite partner's splinter bid, with what kind of hand should you look for slam? This is the beauty of the splinter bid. If your hand has wastage (duplicated values) in the splinter suit, there is probably no slam.

For example, in A, where the Splinter Bid (shortness) was in diamonds, what if opener has: ♠ A K 9 8 2 ♥ Q 5 4 ♦ K Q 7 6 ♣ 2 ?

He knows this is a misfit—his diamond cards are wasted and he will sign off in 4♠.

However, if he holds: ♠ A K 9 8 2 ♥ K 2 ♦ 7 6 5 3 ♣ A 2, he will know the fit is excellent and 6♠ might be reached. Look at these two hands together – with a combined 25 HCP, slam is excellent:

♠ A K 9 8 2	♥ K 2	♦ 7 6 5 3	♣ A 2
♠ Q J 7 6	♥ A 7 3	♦ 2	♣ K J 8 7 6

On example B, where the Splinter Bid (shortness) was in clubs, responder might hold: ♠ 8 3 2 ♥ K 10 8 7 ♦ K 5 2 ♣ K J 3.

He would know that his club cards are wasted and he will sign-off in 4♥. However, if he holds: ♠ A 3 2 ♥ K 10 8 7 ♦ K 4 2 ♣ J 4 3, he knows his cards are worth their weight in gold and 6♥ might be reached. Again, look at these two hands together – with a combined 29 HCP, slam is excellent:

♠ A 3 2	♥ K 10 8 7	♦ K 4 2	♣ J 4 3
♠ K J 4	♥ A Q J 3	♦ A Q J 5 4	♣ 3

On Example C, where the Splinter Bid (shortness) was in diamonds, if opener holds: ♠ Q 5 3 2 ♥ 2 ♦ A K J ♣ K 9 8 7 5, he knows that his hand is mostly useless.

However, a holding of: ♠ A Q J 2 ♥ K ♦ 7 6 5 ♣ A J 10 7 6, would obviously be beautiful (no diamond wastage) and slam is in the picture. Look at these two hands together – with a combined 27 HCP, slam is excellent:

♠ A Q J 2	♥ K	♦ 7 6 5	♣ A J 10 7 6
♠ K T 7 6	♥ A Q J 7 6 4	♦ -	♣ Q 4 3

Although they consume bidding space, splinter bids are very descriptive as they help partner to re-evaluate his/her hand: **Soft honours (a king, queen or jack) in the splinter suit lose value, while honours in the other three suits gain value.**

All expert players use splinter bids. When they come up (if you remember them) they are a valuable tool. They are alertable **after** the auction is over.