

Splinter Bids

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Splinter bids are tightly defined, used to get to games and slams that are not otherwise biddable if we are guided by high card points alone. They don't happen very often, but when they do, they are very effective. Splinter bids have been used consistently since the early 60's.

You will find it on your convention card under "Major Opening". Partner must alert your splinter bid.

Splinters are often used by responder to a major suit opening. Responder has 4+ card support of opener's suit, 10-13 HCP with a singleton or 9-12 HCP with a void. Responder should not make a splinter bid if he has the ace or the king in the splintered suit because it is too difficult for opener to accurately evaluate his partner's hand. Here are a few examples with you as responder after partner opens with 1♠. What is your bid?

Hand (A) ♠QJ83 ♥7 ♦AK32 ♣J432

Hand (B) ♠QJ832 ♥AK32 ♦ - ♣5432

Hand (C) ♠AQ83 ♥Q432 ♦AK32 ♣7

Hand (D) ♠Q5432 ♥A432 ♦Q432 ♣7

Hand (E) ♠Q5432 ♥A432 ♦K5432 ♣ -

Hand (A): 11 HCP + 3 points for singleton. Bid 4♥.

Hand (B): 10 HCP + 5 points for void. Bid 4♦.

Hand (C): 15 HCP + 3 points for singleton. This hand is too strong for a splinter bid. Responder should already be thinking about slam, so it would be useful to know more about opener's hand, so we go more slowly. If partnership plays Jacoby 2NT, responder should bid it. If not, responder should make a forcing bid (with this hand, responder would bid 2♦).

Hand (D): 8 HCP + 3 points for singleton. Bid 4♠. Responder does not have enough high card points to make a splinter bid. This is what some call a

“weak freak”, which is a super (10+) trump fit, plus a singleton or void, with up to 8 HCP.

Hand (E) 9 HCP + 5 points for void. Bid 4♣.

When evaluating opposite a Splinter bid, be bold with the ace of the Splinter suit, but be cautious with shortage and/or the king, queen or jack of the Splinter suit. For example, you hold:

♠KQJ96 ♥KJ4 ♦A43 ♣K10

The bidding has proceeded 1♠ by you and partner makes a splinter bid of 4♥. Since the King and Jack of hearts are now non-working cards opposite partner’s singleton or void, Opener’s hand reevaluates to 13 HCP instead of 17 HCP. Opener should bid 4♠.

Alternatively, opener’s hand could be:

♠KQJ96 ♥654 ♦AK4 ♣K10

In this case, opener’s high card points are all working. Let’s envision partner’s hand:

♠A754 ♥9 ♦Q865 ♣A876

Between the opener’s and responder’s hands, there are only 26 combined HCPs. The only loser we have, however, is one heart. Opener should bid Blackwood. When he hears that responder has two aces, he bids slam. 6 spades bid and made!

The other common usage for a splinter bid would be opener’s bid in response to responder’s bid suit:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
4♥*	?

Since responder may have as few as 6 HCP, Opener needs to have at least 17 HCP's plus a singleton or void. His hand could look something like this:

♠AQ86 ♥9 ♦AQ105 ♣KQ76 (17 HCP + 3 for the singleton heart)

If responder has a minimum, he would just bid 4♠ and the auction would end. If responder is interested in slam, he could bid on by using Blackwood or making a control-showing bid.

Summary of a Splinter Bid

- An unusual jump (typically a double jump) which makes no sense otherwise.
- Guarantees a fit (4+ card support) for the last-named suit by Partner.
- Singleton or Void in the suit in which the jump is made.
- Responder shows 10-13 HCPs with a singleton and 9-12 HCPs with a void after a major suit opener.
- If splinter bid is made by Opener, opener shows 17+ HCP, 4+ card support of responder's suit and double jumps into his singleton or void.
- I suggest Splinters are "off" over interference (too confusing)
- Do not splinter if singleton is the ace (too powerful) or the king (probably useless).
- Splinter bids can be made by either the opener or responder.
- The splinter bid is alertable.