

Splinter bid

This Topic provides you with hands where you open with one in a major. Responder has fit and is game forcing. Apart from that, responder has a short side suit. All this information can be described using one bid. A double jump in a new suit, in response to the opening bid of one in a major, shows exactly that.

A typical hand is shown below

♠ K872
♥ AQ63
♦ QJ76
♣ 7

In response to a 1♠ opening, you bid 4♣ with this hand, showing a game forcing hand, at least four card trump support and shortage in clubs. Partner can use this information to judge whether we belong in game or slam.

Look at two different hands partner might hold

A	B
♠ AQ963	♠ AQ963
♥ K10	♥ K10
♦ 982	♦ AK2
♣ AK2	♣ 982

With hand A partner knows ♣K is wasted and his three small diamonds are a potential problem. With hand B partner knows that all of his points are working and that his three small clubs are not a problem. With hand A you belong in 4♠, 5♠ can go down on a Diamond ruff, and with hand B you belong in 6♠.

A couple of points are worth mentioning before giving a complete schedule.

- Because the whole point of using a splinter bid is showing the possibility of ruffing multiple cards of that suit in dummy, you need an extra trump to make a direct splinter bid. You therefore require at least four trumps, not three.
- Preferably you don't use a splinter bid with a singleton Ace or King, because otherwise partner will misjudge his honors in that suit. In general partner will play you for a small singleton.
- You can have either a singleton or a void for your splinter bid. With a void there's always the danger that partner will misjudge his Ace in that suit. That's the reason some pairs have devised methods to distinguish between the two. Repeating the splinter suit on the five level typically shows a void.
- You have to agree on a specific HCP range for the splinter bid. If that range is too wide, partner still wouldn't know when to sign off and when to continue.
- We don't use four in the other major as a splinter bid (4♥ or 4♠). These bids remain natural.

You	Partner	
1♠	4♣	splinter, short ♣, GF and ♠ fit, 10-14 HCP
	4♦	cuebid, slam interest
	4♥	cuebid, slam interest
	4♠	to play, no slam interest
	4♦	splinter, short ♦, GF and ♠ fit, 10-14 HCP
	4♥	cuebid, slam interest
	4♥	natural, to play
	4♠	natural, to play

Notice that the 4♣ and 4♦ bids show 10-14 points. If you have more than that, you have to go through a different route to find out whether you belong in game or slam.

In response to a splinter bid, partner can do one of three things. He starts out by judging the strength of his opening hand, based on the extra information of the splinter bid. With a minimum he will sign off in game, with a maximum he will check for keycards and with an in between hand he will make a cuebid and let partner decide.

Finally, we need to mention the possibility of splinter bids in other situations than the one we already described. The principles are similar there, but some things change.

You	Partner	
1♣	1♠	
4♦		splinter bid, GF with four Spades, 17-19 HCP

You	Partner	
1♣	1♥	
1♠	4♦	splinter bid, GF with four Spades, 10-14 HCP

You no longer need an extra trump to use a splinter bid here. Partner knows your exact number of trumps anyway.