



Topics In Bidding

The Major Fit Auction

Splinter Bids

Notes

Splinter bids were devised by Dorothy Hayden Truscott in the 1960s

In an uncontested auction a splinter bid is an **unusual jump** in a new suit.

It shows:

- i 4+ card support for partner's last bid suit
- ii a singleton or void in the suit in which the jump is made.
- iii it promises that game will be reached and a slam is possible.

A splinter bid can be made:

- a) by responder following partner's opening bid
- b) by opener following partner's response to his opening bid
- c) by responder following opener's rebid

The last bid in each of the following sequences is a splinter.

	West	East	
1.	1♠	4♣	A splinter over partner's opening bid
2.	1♥	4♦	
3.	1♥	3♠	
4.	1♠	4♥	

5.	1♣	1♥	A splinter over partner's response to your opening bid
	3♦		
6.	1♠	2♦	
	4♣		

7.	1♠	2♣	A splinter over partner's rebid. 3♦ would be forcing so 4♦ is a splinter
	2♥	4♦	

The intention of a splinter is to pinpoint the fit and to hint at the possibility of distributional values. Knowing this, the partner of the splinter bidder can reassess their hand and decide whether a slam may be possible on slim values where all their points are working in tandem with partner's and, where they have losers in partner's short suit, they can be taken care of by ruffing.

When a jump bid is made where a lower level bid would be forcing it should be taken as a splinter.

See 7. Above.

A repeat of the splinter bid shows a void in the splinter suit.

Over a splinter:

opener's new suit is a cue bid.

4NT is ace asking.

Making A Splinter Bid

A splinter by responder following partner's opening bid shows:

4-card support : 10-13 points : a singleton or void in the suit bid

With more points or a 5-loser hand a jump shift is more appropriate if you have a very good suit of your own or otherwise use Jacoby 2NT

Partner opens 1♥ and you hold the following.

What should your response be?

W	E
1♥	?

A.

♠ K Q 10 6 4
♥ A Q 10 5
♦ 4
♣ J 9 7

B.

♠ 6
♥ K Q 10 5
♦ A Q 10 9 7
♣ J 9 7

C.

♠ 9 6 4
♥ K J 10 3
♦ 4
♣ A 7 6 4 2

D.

♠ A 7 6
♥ K Q 10 5
♦ 4
♣ A K J 10 4

- With a singleton diamond and a 6-loser hand make a splinter bid of 4♦.
- With a singleton spade and a 6-loser hand make a splinter bid of 3♠.
- This hand is not strong enough to splinter.
Make the limit bid of 3♥.
- With five losers this hand is too strong to splinter.
Force with a bid of 3♣.

A splinter by opener in support of responder's suit shows:

- 4-card support
- a hand which is strong enough to jump to game in responder's suit
This will be 19+ points or no more than five losers.

You open 1♦ and partner responds 1♥.

What should your rebid be?

W	E
1♦	1♥
?	

E.

♠ K Q 6
♥ A Q 10 5
♦ A K J 10 4
♣ -

F.

♠ 8
♥ K Q 7 5
♦ A K Q 10 5
♣ A 4 3

G.

♠ A J 9
♥ Q J 8 4
♦ A K J 9 7 3
♣ -

H.

♠ A
♥ K Q 9 2
♦ K Q J 10 5
♣ Q 10 5

- With a club void and three losers make a splinter bid of 4♣.
- With a singleton spade and four losers make splinter bid of 3♠.
- With a club void and five losers make a splinter bid of 4♣.
- When you make a splinter bid partner will expect your high card strength to be in your longer suits.
To splinter with a singleton ace is misleading.
Force with a bid of 3♣.

Assessing Your Hand After Partner Has Made A Splinter Bid

The perfect holding in a suit in which partner has splintered is one with no wasted values.

1.

♣ 9 8 7 6

N		
W	E	
		S

♣ 4

2.

♣ 8 7 6

N		
W	E	
		S

♣ 4

West opens 1♠ and east makes a splinter of 4♣.

This is good news for west.

There are no wasted values in clubs and losers there can be ruffed in dummy.

West's values in the other suits are combining well with east's values.

One way to think of it is:

Partner has shown a fit and announced that there are sufficient tricks for game.

In a major, if you can take two ruffs in dummy, you will raise the trick total from 10 to 12.

....but you may need to check on controls before bidding the slam.

3.

♣ A 9 8 7

N		
W	E	
		S

♣ 4

West opens 1♠ and east makes a splinter of 4♣.

The splinter here is similarly good news.

West will win the first club and can then ruff remaining club losers in dummy.

This should raise the tick tally from 10 to 12.

Compare the above with declarer's club suit in the examples below.

4.

♣ K Q J 6

N		
W	E	
		S

♣ 4

5.

♣ A K Q

N		
W	E	
		S

♣ 4

In 4. East's splinter is not good news for west.

West has high card values in clubs and, with only one loser, east's shortage is no help.

West's high cards entitle him to club tricks and no extra tricks are generated by virtue of east's ruffing potential.

5. is similar.

West needs no help.

Extra tricks will not be generated by ruffing clubs in dummy.

Bernard Magee quotes the following examples in Bridge Magazine.

1.

West	
♠ A 5 4	
♥ K J 4 3	
♦ 4	
♣ A 8 6 4 3	

N	E
W	E
S	

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

W	E
	1♥
4♦ ¹	4NT ²
5♣ ³	6♥
end	

1. Splinter - singleton or void diamond
2. RKCB
3. Three key cards

West's splinter is good news for east.

His hand is minimum in terms of high card points but there is an excellent fit.

He has no wasted values in diamonds and his losers there can be ruffed in dummy.

Compare the following.

The west hand is the same.

The suits in the east hand have been shuffled round.

2.

West	
♠ A 5 4	
♥ K J 4 3	
♦ 4	
♣ A 8 6 4 3	

N	E
W	E
S	

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

W	E
	1♥
4♦ ¹	4♥
end	

1. Splinter - singleton or void diamond

West's splinter is not good news for east.

It demonstrates there are wasted values between the hands with east holding 6 of his points in the suit where west is short.

East's weakness in spades is a warning to go no further and he reverts to 4♥.

Michelle Brunner quotes the following examples.

3.

West	
♠ K 3	
♥ A J 10 9 8	
♦ 9 5 4 3	
♣ A Q	

N	
W	E
S	

East	
♠ A 6 5 4	
♥ K Q 7 5	
♦ 2	
♣ K 8 7 6	

W	E
1♥	4♦ ¹
4NT ²	5♠ ³
6♥	end

1. Splinter
2. RKCB
3. Two key cards plus the queen of trumps

East's splinter is good news for west.

It demonstrates there are no wasted values between the hands and that west's losing diamonds can be taken care of by ruffing in the east hand.

4.

West	
♠ K 3	
♥ A J 10 9 8	
♦ 9 5 4 3	
♣ A Q	

N	
W	E
S	

East	
♠ A 6 5 4	
♥ K Q 7 5	
♦ K 8 7 6	
♣ 2	

W	E
1♥	4♣ ¹
4♥	end

1. Splinter

The same hand but with east's diamonds and clubs reversed.

Now the splinter gives a warning to west that the diamonds present a problem.

Freddie North quotes the following examples.

5.

West	
♠ Q J 5	
♥ A Q 9 6	
♦ A K Q 10 4	
♣ 7	

N	
W	E
S	

East	
♠ A 4	
♥ K J 10 7 5	
♦ 8 5 3	
♣ 9 6 4	

W	E
1♦	1♥
4♣ ¹	4♠ ²
6♥	end

1. Splinter
2. Cue bid

After west splinters east is pleased to know his clubs can be taken care of by ruffing. But, three small cards in partner's first suit is an unattractive holding when considering a slam. Nonetheless, he holds good trumps and an ace. A cue bid of 4♠ would not commit the partnership to the slam so he tries it. This was all west wanted to hear and he bids 6♥.

6.

West	
♠ A J 4	
♥ K Q 10 3	
♦ 8	
♣ A Q J 9 6	

N	
W	E
S	

East	
♠ Q 5 3	
♥ A J 9 8 5	
♦ K J 10 5	
♣ 4	

W	E
1♣	1♥
4♦ ¹	4♥
end	

1. Splinter

West's bid of 4♦ alerts east to the fact that the hands are ill-fitting and that the slam is unlikely. He closes the auction with a bid of 4♥

7.

West	
♠	A Q 10 8 6
♥	A 6
♦	K Q
♣	10 7 5 2

N		E	
W			E
			S

East	
♠	K J 9 5
♥	K Q 7 4
♦	J 10 6 4 3
♣	-

W	E
1♠	4♣ ¹
4♥ ²	5♣ ³
5♦ ⁴	5♥ ⁵
6♠	end

1. Splinter
2. Cue bid – first round control – denies the ace of diamonds
3. Confirms the void
4. Cue bid – second round control
5. Cue bid – second round control

West opens 1♠.

East has a 6-loser hand in support of spades and a slam is possible if the hands fit well.

He makes a splinter bid in clubs.

This is good news for west with four small clubs which can be ruffed in dummy.

He makes a cue bid in hearts.

Having gone past 4♦ this denies 1st round control of diamonds.

By rebidding the splinter suit east shows a void.

Having denied 1st round control west now shows 2nd round control of diamonds.

East shows 2nd round control of hearts.

This is enough for west to bid the slam.

Test Hands

Michelle Brunner gives the following example hands.

How do you respond to partner's opening bid of 1♥?

1.

♠AK43
♥K86432
♦-
♣987

4♦

This is a six loser hand with 10 HCP.

In response to partner's opening bid of 1♥, with a diamond void it warrants a splinter.

2.

♠QJ74
♥J654
♦K653
♣A

3♥

The singleton is an ace and a splinter is not recommended.

The limit bid of 3♥ is preferred.

3.

♠2
♥AJ764
♦J43
♣KQJ6

3♠

This is a seven loser hand with 12 HCP.

In response to partner's opening bid of 1♥, with a singleton spade it warrants a splinter.

4.

♠9864
♥KQ65
♦AQ73
♣Q

4♣

This is a six loser hand with 13 HCP.

Even though the singleton is a queen it warrants a splinter.

5.

♠KQJ6
♥KJ76
♦J
♣K653

4♦

This is a seven loser hand with 14 HCP.

In response to partner's opening bid of 1♥, with a singleton diamond it warrants a splinter.

6.

♠975
♥KQJ5
♦AKQ65
♣2

3♦

Although this hand contains a singleton, with 5 losers, it is too strong for a splinter.

A jump shift is best to show the strength.

How do you respond to partner's opening bid of 1♠?

7.

♠ QJ87
♥ K6
♦ 3
♣ A87532

4♦

This is a seven loser hand with 10 HCP.

In response to partner's opening bid of 1♠, with a singleton diamond it warrants a splinter.

8.

♠ K976
♥ AJ5
♦ J8754
♣ J

3♠

This also has 10 HCP but is an eight loser hand.

It is not strong enough to warrant a splinter and the limit bid is preferred.

9.

♠ KJ754
♥ 3
♦ AKJ5
♣ 973

4♥

This is a seven loser hand with 12 HCP.

In response to partner's opening bid of 1♠, with a singleton heart it warrants a splinter.

10.

♠ A QJ75
♥ Q32
♦ KJ743
♣ -

4♣

Although this is a five loser hand it is not strong enough for a jump shift.

In response to partner's opening bid of 1♠, with a club void, the splinter is preferred.

11.

♠ Q432
♥ AK4
♦ Q
♣ K7632

4♦

This is a six loser hand with 14 HCP.

Although the singleton is a queen it warrants a splinter.

12.

♠ KQJ8
♥ 8
♦ 7
♣ AKQ8653

4NT

If partner has two or three aces a slam is a lay-down.

There is no need for a splinter.

How do you respond to partner's opening bid of 1♣?

13.

♠ 6
♥ K J 2
♦ Q J 7 6
♣ A Q 7 6 5

3♠

This is a six loser hand with 13 HCP.

14.

♠ A J 7 6 5
♥ A
♦ J 7 6
♣ K 8 7 6

1♠

This is a seven loser hand with 13 HCP.

However, the singleton is an ace and it is not suitable for a splinter.

15.

♠ A 9 8
♥ 4
♦ A J 5
♣ K J 7 6 3 2

3♥

This is a seven loser hand with 13 HCP.

A splinter is the best bid.

16.

♠ Q 5 4
♥ K Q J 9
♦ 2
♣ A Q 7 5 2

1♥

This hand, with five losers, is too strong for a splinter. It has a four card major but is not strong enough for a jump shift.

Make the holding bid of 1♥.

17.

♠ K Q 2
♥ A J 2
♦ Q
♣ Q 8 6 4 3 2

3♦

This is a six loser hand with 14 HCP.

With no four card major the splinter is the best bid.

18.

♠ A K Q J 5
♥ 5
♦ 8 6
♣ K Q J 8 3

2♠

This is a four loser hand.

It is too strong for a splinter.

The jump shift is the best bid.

. How do you rebid as opener after 1♥ - 1♠?

19.

♠ K J 7 6
♥ K Q 8 7 6
♦ Q 6 4
♣ J

2♠

The hand is not strong enough to splinter.

20.

♠ Q 4 3 2
♥ A 8 5 4 2
♦ 4
♣ A K 6

3♠

The hand is not strong enough to splinter.

The limit raise is best.

21.

♠ A K 6 5
♥ A K 6 5 4 3
♦ 6 5
♣ 2

4♣

This is a five loser hand.

Although it contains only 14 HCP the splinter is the best bid.

22.

♠ K J 7 6
♥ K Q 7 6
♦ K Q J 4
♣ 3

3♠

This hand is aceless.

Although it contains five losers it is not suitable for a splinter.

23.

♠ A Q 8 7
♥ A K 7 5 2
♦ -
♣ Q J 7 3

4♦

This is a four loser hand and is ideal for a splinter.

24.

♠ A Q J 5
♥ Q J 8 7 6
♦ A K 7
♣ Q

4♣

Even though the singleton is a queen this is a five loser hand and is best described by a splinter.