



Topics In Bidding

The Major Fit Auction

Raising Partner's Major

Notes

1. Introduction

Locating an 8-card major fit is a fundamental aim in the bidding.

When one side of the partnership knows there is a major fit they should let partner know immediately. If you fail to do so it is unlikely you will persuade partner later that you have 4-card support.

Many inferences in the bidding derive from the assumption that a major fit will be disclosed as soon as one or other partner knows it exists.

Failure to do so can make the later auction less clear.

Responder uses : The Responder Strength Scale

Opener uses : The Opener Strength Scale.

In basic acol responder is advised to show a fit with opener's major by making a limit raise as follows:

HCP	0-5	6-9	10-12	13-15
	Pass	Single Raise	Jump Raise	Game Raise
e.g.		1♠ - 2♠	1♠ - 3♠	1♠ - 4♠

And opener is advised to show a fit with responder's major as follows:

HCP	11-15	16-18	19
	Single Raise	Jump Raise	Game Raise
	1♥ - 1♠	1♥ - 1♠	1♥ - 1♠
	2♠ -	3♠ -	4♠ -

These limit raises work well in most circumstances but, with some modification and with the addition of some conventional bids, a broader range of hand types and features can be shown.

The revised scheme gives greater scope as follows.

1. Responder makes a direct raise to 4M to show a 7-loser hand of less than opening strength but with very good support.

With this shape strong hand responder makes it clear they have no aspirations beyond game.

This is a 2-way bid.

The contract may make but, if it fails, the bid has pre-emptive value and will have prevented the opposition from finding a good scoring contract.

2. Having allocated the sequence 1M : 4M to show a shape strong hand a mechanism is needed to show the value raise to game.

This is achieved using the use the Jacoby 2NT conventional response.

1M : 2NT shows a fit with opener's major together with game values and asks for more information which may allow slam diagnosis.

3. Responder (or opener in support of responder's major) can use a splinter bid to show a fit, game values and a side suit shortage.

This may allow a slam to be bid on fewer than normal values with suitably fitting hands.

The structure over an opening bid of 1m is different.

The emphasis remains on locating a major fit and there is often a preference to play in 3NT rather than in game in a minor.

2. Raising Partner's Opening Bid Of One Of A Major

The structure of raises in support of partner's opening bid of one of a major now encompasses the five types of raise below.

1. The weak raise : 1♠ - 2♠ or 1♥ - 2♥
2. The limit raise : 1♠ - 3♠ or 1♥ - 3♥
3. The shapely game raise : 1♠ - 4♠ or 1♥ - 4♥
4. The conventional raises :
 - 4a. Jacoby 2NT : 1♠ - 2NT or 1♥ - 2NT
 - 4b. Splinter raise :

W	E
1♠	4♣ / 4♦ / 4♥

W	E
1♥	3♠ / 4♣ / 4♦

The direct raises are detailed below.

The conventional raises are discussed separately.

2.1 The Weak Raise

A

♠ Q 7 5
♥ A J 6 5
♦ 10 9 5 4
♣ 7 4

B

♠ 7
♥ K 10 8 4
♦ 8 7 4 3 2
♣ 9 8 3

C

♠ K J 7
♥ J 8 7 4
♦ 7 6
♣ 9 8 3 2

D

♠ 10 8 7 4 3 2
♥ Q 9 7 6
♦ 3 2
♣ 7

Hand A above is a typical weak raise of 1♥ to 2♥.

However, many pairs now play weak two opening bids rather than strong twos and may be obliged to open some relatively strong hands at the 1-level.

To compensate for this there needs to be some relaxation of the need for a pure 6-9 HCP to raise partner's opening of 1M to 2M.

In his article in English Bridge - October 2014 Michael Byrne advocates raising partner's 1♥ opening bid to 2♥ with B, C & D also.

This covers the possibility that partner has opened 1M with an absolute maximum.

This approach should not get you into trouble.

After responder shows support opener needs 19 points and a 5-card suit to raise directly to game.

With a balanced 17-18 HCP partner will rebid 2NT and responder can sign off in 3♥.

With a balanced 19 HCP partner will bid 3NT and responder can convert to 4♥.

In all cases responder's shape should see opener home.

Where opener is weaker responder has done as much as possible to keep the opposition out of the auction.

2.2 The Limit Raise

The raise of 1M to 3M shows a hand not quite strong enough to commit to game but happy to be in game if opener has 15-16 points.

Hand strength will be a good 9 to a poor 12 points.

Michael Byrne quotes the following examples.

E	F	G
♠ A 4 3 2	♠ K J 9 8	♠ Q 8 7
♥ Q 10 7 6	♥ Q 10 7 6 4	♥ Q J 4 3
♦ Q J 8	♦ J 5	♦ Q J 7
♣ J 8	♣ Q 3	♣ K J 8

E. is a run of the mill 10 point hand.

It is not a great hand but is too strong for 1♥ - 2♥.

F. has fewer points but, with 5-card support, is too strong for 1♥ - 2♥.

G. is a rock bottom 12 count.

Most 12 point hands should use Jacoby (q.v.) to push towards game but this poor 4-3-3-3 warrants no more than 1♥ - 3♥.

The limit raise is not forcing.

It asks opener to use judgement to decide whether or not to bid game.

2.3 The Shapely Game Raise

The shapely game raises:

1♠ - 4♠ and 1♥ - 4♥

show hands which are weak in terms of high card points but which have good playing strength and little defensive strength.

The rationale behind the bids is to secure the contract in your best fit and to shut the opponents out of the auction.

Again from Michael Byrne:

The hands below demonstrate the minimum suitable for this type of raise.

H	I	J
♠ 6	♠ J 9 8 4 3	♠ 6
♥ K 9 8 5 4 2	♥ Q J 10 7 3	♥ J 9 6 4 3
♦ J 6	♦ -	♦ Q 8 7 5 4 2
♣ 9 7 4 3	♣ 9 4 3	♣ 10

This type of bid is pre-emptive.

It says you want partner's major as trumps and states categorically that you want to go no further.

These are all examples of minimum requirements but the maximum is not much more than this.

Essentially a 7-loser hand and never more than 9 points.

With a better hand you should use Jacoby or a splinter bid.

See separate notes covering:

Splinter Bids

Jacoby 2NT