

Bergen Raises (Requires Alert)

Bergen raises specify a conventional treatment of raising a major suit opening in a five-card major system. This convention is named after Marty Bergen, the developer of this treatment.

Bergen Raises apply when partner (playing 5-card **majors**) opens 1 of a **major**. The theory is that you want to bid to the level of the combined length of your trump suit, according to "**The Law of Total Tricks**," ie., with 4-card support + partners 5 = 9 tricks = 3 level. With a weak hand and 4 trumps you can jump to the 3 level (pre-empt) **With nine trumps one should compete at the three-level regardless of high card strength.**

Partnerships which employ Bergen raises, often utilize a Jacoby 2NT response to major suit openings for game-forcing hands with trump support. A direct raise to game is then preemptive on a very shapely hand (often with five card trump support).

A bid of 3♦ bid over a **major suit opening** is a limit raise, and game is usually bid on the premise that normally 23 points are sufficient for game with a 9 card fit.

Modifications to Bergen responses do exist. One such method is to reverse the meanings of the two minor suit responses at the three level, thereby creating a system of responses that denote progressively weaker hands on subsequent bids.

Note: This table of examples assumes a basic system of 2/1

North	South	Shows
1♥/1♣	2♥/2♣	8-10 Points with 3 trumps (constructive raise)
1♥/1♣	3♥/3♣!	0-6 Points with 4 trumps
1♥/1♣	1NT!	5-12 Points, less than 4 trumps, good other major /other suit (forcing) (If responder has good 10-12 and 3 trumps, he rebids 3 of opener's suit)
1♥/1♣	2NT!	J2NT (forcing)
1♥/1♣	3♣!	7-9 Points and 4 trumps
1♥/1♣	3♦!	10-12 Points and 4 trumps (limit raise)
1♥/1♣	4♥/4♣!	0-6 Points and 5 trumps
1♥	2♣/2♦!	Game Forcing
1♣	2♥/2♣/2♦!	Game Forcing

Note 1: Many use 3♣! as the "limit" raise and 3♦! to show 7-9, either way the **minor** raise is artificial and says nothing about the bid suit.

Note 2: A jump to 3 of the **other major** shows a hand worth a raise to game with singleton or void in side suit: if opener wishes to discover the short suit he bids in steps eg., 1♥-3♣!, opener bids 3NT! to ask about the singleton/void: responses are: 4♣! or 4♦! = singleton/void in bid suit: 4♥! = singleton/void in **spades**. (Over 1♣-3♥!, 3♣! would ask about the short suit and a 3NT! response would = single/void in **clubs** etc.). This is known as the unspecified splinter. Many who play Bergen do not use this, so be sure to talk this over with your partner.