

Splinter Bid

Huh? A Splinter Bid is a game force response in the opener's suit by a hand with a singleton or void. The reason is that sometimes the singleton will enable opener to explore Slam, knowing there's only one loser max in the splintered suit.

Situation: when a responder has an opening hand in support of a major suit opener and with a singleton, we bid as follows:.

<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>W</i>
1♠	P	4♦*	...

"North, I have an opening hand or better, a Spade fit and a stiff Diamond."

The South hand, bidding a splinter in support of a 1♠ opener, could be:

♠ KQxx	or	♠ Axxx
♥ Axx		♥ KQxxx
♦ x		♦ x
♣ KJTxx		♣ AJx

North can simply bid game, cue bid Aces, explore with Blackwood or go directly to slam.

Strength: an opening hand or equivalent in support of opener's suit.

Usage; fairly common, although it only comes up once or twice a year, but you will be glad you know it when it does!

Note 1:

In competition after opponent's takeout double, splinter bids are still "on".

Note 2:

In non-competitive auctions, Splinter bids may be extended to areas of rebidding, by both opener and responder. In this respect the "rule of thumb" is if a particular new-suit bid would be forcing, then one level higher in that same suit is a splinter bid.

Note 3:

Controls plus Tricks can produce slam on less than 33 points

Excerpts from SPLINTERS AND OTHER SHORTNESS BIDS

By
John Blubaugh

The splinter bid was invented by Dorothy Hayden Truscott to show a singleton or void and trump support for partner. The most common splinter bid is the double jump shift:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	4♦	

East's 4♦ bid shows a forcing raise in hearts (four-card support) and diamond shortness (singleton or void). The splinter bid in this situation does not show massive power and should be limited to 11 to 14 HCP. The splinter suggests a slam might be possible if the hands are "working." This means that if West had three or four small diamonds he may be able to make a slam because all of East's high card points will be in the other suits and hands will be "working together." If West has a number of high card points in diamonds, he has a warning that those values may be "wasted" and slam should be avoided. For this reason, it is imperative that East does not make a splinter bid with a singleton ace or king of diamonds.

Many experts have an agreement that a splinter shows a singleton, denies a void and shows a control (an ace or king) in each of the outside suits. When they have a void, they show a strong trump raise and then cuebid the void later. They don't make many splinter bids but when they do they really mean something. It is a major advantage to be able to show all of this with one bid.

Here are some other simple splinter bids:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	3♠	

This is a splinter showing spade shortness and four-card heart support with game forcing values (11-14 HCP). If partner had a spade preempt, he must bid 1♠ followed by 2♠, followed by 3♠.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	4♥	

The same as the auction above with the major suits reversed. Again, if East really had hearts, he could bid 2♥ and then follow that with 4♥.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
4♣			

West is showing a very good hand that is willing to play a game in hearts opposite a minimum 1♥ response by East (as little as six high card points). The 4♣ bid indicates four-card heart support and a singleton or void in clubs.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♣, 4♦, 4♥	

4♣, 4♦ and 4♥ are splinters showing game forcing values, four spades, and a singleton or void in the suit bid.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass

2♣ Pass 4♣, 4♦,
4♥

(1) Transfer to spades

4♣, 4♦ and 4♥ are splinter bids showing game forcing values, at least six spades (West may have only two spades), and a singleton or void in the bid suit.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♣	

3♣ shows a splinter in an unspecified suit and at least mild slam interest. West would simply bid 4♥ if he had a very flat minimum hand. If West has slam interest if the splinter is the “right” suit, he can bid 3NT to ask which suit East is short in. East’s responses to 3NT are:

4♣ = Singleton or void in clubs
 4♦ = Singleton or void in diamonds
 4♥ = Singleton or void in spades

West can now evaluate his hand to see if the two hands are “working.”

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♣	Pass	3♥	

Here is the same idea at work after a 2♣ response. 3♥ is an unspecified splinter. West can bid 3♣ to ask about the short suit.

East responses are:

4♣ = Singleton or void in clubs
 4♦ = Singleton or void in diamonds
 4♥ = Singleton or void in hearts

A variation of this treatment can also be used over transfer bids. First, you must change your convention card to show that a bid of 3♥ over a 1NT opening bid shows 5-5 in the major suits with invitational values and 3♣ over a 1NT opening bid shows 5-5 in the major suits forcing to game. This also allows 4♣ to be Roman Keycard Gerber after a transfer bid.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1NT	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♣	

(1) Transfer to hearts

3♣ shows at least six hearts (West may have only two) and an unspecified singleton or void with mild slam interest. West can inquire about the short suit by bidding 3NT.

East’s responses to 3♣ are:

4♣ = Singleton or void in clubs
 4♦ = Singleton or void in diamonds
 4♥ = Singleton or void in spades

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
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1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♣	Pass	3♥	

(1) Transfer to spades

3♥ shows at least six spades and an unspecified singleton or void with mild slam interest. West can ask about the short suit by bidding 3♣.

East's responses to 3♣ are:

4♣ = Singleton or void in clubs
 4♦ = Singleton or void in diamonds
 4♥ = Singleton or void in hearts

Here are some splinters that developing players sometimes miss:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Pass	1♥ or 1♠	Pass
3♦			

3♦ is a splinter in support of East's suit. 2♦ would have been a reverse and therefore forcing. Do you need 3♦ to be even more forcing? Better to use this bid as a splinter.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	2♣	Pass
3♦			

Playing 2/1, 2♦ would have been forcing. Therefore, 3♦ is a splinter in support of clubs.

RESPONDING TO SPLINTER BIDS

The responses to a splinter bid are quite simple. You should cuebid if you interested in a slam. You should return to the original trump suit at the game level if you have no slam interest. The splinter bid has stood the test of time and becomes more and more important in this modern age of bidding light games and slams. You do give up some bidding space but this seems to quite insignificant compared to the amount of information you can load into one simple bid.

There was even more to this, but I cut a lot out. If you want to read everything, go to <http://pages.prodigy.net/jblubaugh/splint1.htm>

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