



Does a limit raise of partner's major suit show 10-12 or 11-12 points? Both ranges can be found in bridge books, along with a few others. In this article, **Eric Rodwell** explains why more than one range can be appropriate.

This is part of a series of articles by Eric on 2/1 game force. Eric is a world-class player and theorist. Previous articles in the series can be found at: www.betterbridge.com/articles

When the opening bid is 1♥ or 1♠, responder's first question is, "Can I support partner's major?" The reason is simple. Once a major suit fit has been found, responder knows **WHERE** the contract is to be played—in the major suit. The only remaining challenge is **HOW HIGH**: partscore, game or slam.

3-Card Versus 4-Card Support

Since the opening bid of 1♥ or 1♠ promises a five-card suit, responder needs only three-card support to be sure that the partnership has at least an eight-card fit. An eight-card fit is certainly adequate for a trump suit, but a nine-card fit is even better.

The partnership can usually be more aggressive when it has a nine-card fit. To see why, consider this deal in which there is an eight-card spade fit.

Major Suit Raises

<p>♠ K 8 5 ♥ J 7 4 ♦ A 6 3 ♣ K 8 6 3</p> <p>♠ 10 3 ♥ K Q 10 6 5 ♦ Q 10 7 4 ♣ J 9</p>	<p>♠ J 7 2 ♥ A 8 2 ♦ J 9 ♣ Q 10 7 4 2</p> <p>♠ A Q 9 6 4 ♥ 9 3 ♦ K 8 5 2 ♣ A 5</p>
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Suppose South opens 1♠ and North, with 11 high-card points and three-card support, makes an invitational raise using the partnership's methods. Should South accept? South has a borderline decision with 13 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card suit. Let's see what happens if South decides to bid 4♠.

Assuming the five missing trumps divide 3-2, South has two heart losers and two diamond losers. There's nothing that can be done about the heart losers, so South must eliminate a diamond loser. There will be no problem if the missing diamonds divide exactly 3-3, but in the more likely situation where they divide 4-2, declarer needs to trump a diamond in dummy.

Look at the dilemma declarer faces. If South draws all the defenders' trumps, there will be no trump left in dummy to ruff the diamond. If South doesn't draw trumps, East will be able to overruff when declarer tries to trump the diamond loser in dummy. On this layout, South can't make 4♠.

Now let's give North a fourth spade and see what happens.

<p>♠ K 8 5 3 ♥ J 7 4 ♦ A 6 3 ♣ K 8 6</p> <p>♠ 10 ♥ K Q 10 6 5 ♦ Q 10 7 4 ♣ J 9 3</p>	<p>♠ J 7 2 ♥ A 8 2 ♦ J 9 ♣ Q 10 7 4 2</p> <p>♠ A Q 9 6 4 ♥ 9 3 ♦ K 8 5 2 ♣ A 5</p>
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North doesn't have any extra strength or distribution, but making 4♠ is easy on this layout. South can afford to draw trumps, even though they break 3-1, and still have a trump left in dummy to ruff the diamond loser.

Since the extra trump in dummy can be so important, both standard and 2/1 game force methods tend to treat three-card and four-card support a little differently.

Raising with 3-Card Support

When raising partner's major, it's standard practice to value the hand using *dummy*—shortness—points instead of length points. A short suit is likely to be of some value when it is in the dummy. With three-card support, responder uses this scale:

DUMMY POINTS (3-CARD SUPPORT)

Void	3 points
Singleton	2 points
Doubleton	1 point

This conservative scale takes into account that declarer may have some difficulty trumping losers in dummy when there are only three trumps.

When playing 2/1 game force, we can divide responder's strength into slightly different ranges than when using standard methods. We use the following four ranges with three-card support:

5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13+
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RAISING WITH 5-6 POINTS AND 3-CARD SUPPORT

5 6

In 2/1 game force, responder can afford to raise with a weak hand because there is a way to do it without giving too much encouragement to partner. **Responder takes advantage of the forcing 1NT response.**

WEST	EAST
♠ A Q 9 6 4	♠ J 8 5
♥ 9 3	♥ J 7 4
♦ K 8 5 2	♦ Q J 6 3
♣ A 5	♣ 9 8 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♠	All Pass

West opens 1♠ and with a weak three-card raise East starts with a forcing 1NT. After West's 2♦ rebid, East bids to 2♠. East's weak-sounding preference to 2♠ won't tempt West to bid again on minimum or medium values.

RAISING WITH 7-10 POINTS AND 3-CARD SUPPORT

7 8 9 10

With 7-10 points, responder simply raises to the two level. This is similar to standard methods, but responder promises more than a bare minimum.

WEST	EAST
♠ A Q 9 6 4	♠ K 8 5
♥ 9 3	♥ J 7 4
♦ K 8 5 2	♦ Q J 6 3
♣ A 5	♣ Q 8 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

With more than a minimum, West can consider bidding again if the opponents compete. With a medium hand, West can move toward game.

RAISING WITH 11-12 POINTS AND 3-CARD SUPPORT

11 12

With 11-12 points, responder bids a forcing 1NT and then raises the major to the three level on the rebid. This shows exactly three-card support.

WEST	EAST
♠ A Q 9 6 4	♠ K 8 5
♥ 9 3	♥ J 7 4
♦ K 8 5 2	♦ A 6 3
♣ A 5	♣ K 8 6 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♦	Pass	3♠	All Pass

In deciding whether to accept the invitation, opener is more cautious with a borderline hand, knowing that there will only be three trumps in the dummy.

RAISING WITH 13 OR MORE POINTS AND 3-CARD SUPPORT

13+

With 13 or more points and three-card support, responder starts by bidding a new suit and shows the support at the next opportunity. Since a new suit at the two level is game forcing in 2/1, there's no need for responder to jump on the rebid.

WEST	EAST
♠ A Q 9 6 4	♠ K 8 5
♥ 9 3	♥ J 7 4
♦ K 8 5 2	♦ A Q 3
♣ A 5	♣ K 8 6 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

East's 2/1 2♣ response is a marathon bid, forcing to at least game. After opener's 2♦ rebid, East can show the spade support without worrying about being passed. There's plenty of room left for the partnership to explore for slam if it is interested. With no slam interest, West can simply jump to game.

Things are a little different if the opening bid is 1♥ and responder bids 1♠. The partnership isn't yet forced to game, so responder must make sure to get there. For example:

WEST	EAST
♠ 8 4	♠ A K J 6 5
♥ K J 10 6 3	♥ Q 9 2
♦ Q 4	♦ 9 8
♣ A Q 9 2	♣ K 4 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	4♥	All Pass

On the rebid, East puts the partnership in the eight-card heart fit.

Raising with 4-Card Support

With four-card support, responder can use a more aggressive scale when valuing shortness:

DUMMY POINTS (3-CARD SUPPORT)

Void	5 points
Singleton	3 points
Doubleton	1 point

Declarer should be able to take more advantage of dummy's shortness when there are four trumps.

Responder's strength ranges are also a bit more aggressive:

4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13+

RAISING WITH 4-5 POINTS AND 4-CARD SUPPORT

4 5

Responder goes through the forcing 1NT with a weak raise.

WEST	EAST
♠ A Q 9 6 4	♠ J 8 5 3
♥ 9 3	♥ J 7 4
♦ K 8 5 2	♦ 6 3
♣ A 5	♣ Q 8 6 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♠	All Pass

RAISING WITH 6-9 POINTS AND 4-CARD SUPPORT

6 7 8 9

With 6-9 points, responder raises to the two level with four-card support.

WEST	EAST
♠ A Q 9 6 4	♠ K 8 5 3
♥ 9 3	♥ J 7 4
♦ K 8 5 2	♦ 9 6 3
♣ A 5	♣ K 8 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	2♠	All Pass

RAISING WITH 10-12 POINTS AND 4-CARD SUPPORT

10 11 12

With 10-12 points, responder makes an immediate limit raise, showing four-card support.

WEST	EAST
♠ A Q 9 6 4	♠ K 8 5 3
♥ 9 3	♥ J 7 4
♦ K 8 5 2	♦ A 6 3
♣ A 5	♣ K 8 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

(To be continued.)

