

WASHINGTON BRIDGE LEAGUE

We offer our thanks to Washington Bridge league as we, present a copy from their 2012 August-September bulletin on Major Suit Raises by columnists > Ron Zucker and Shawn Stringer. Read original - [Here](#)

MAJOR SUIT RAISES – RESPONDER SPLINTERS

We have discussed a variety of ways to support partner's major suit opener. We have examined simple raises, invitational (or limit,) raises, forcing raises, preemptive raises, and mixed raises. A basic bidding principle is to make the cheapest bid available to describe your hand. Therefore, a bid that takes up a big chunk of bidding space should show a very specific type of hand. One example of such a bid is a "splinter."

What is a splinter? In your finger, a splinter is an annoying little piece of something. In bridge, a splinter is a little piece of a suit – little meaning one or zero cards in that suit. And the splinter may or may not be annoying to your partner!

When can responder splinter? Responder must have the following size and shape hand in order to make a splinter bid:

- **FOUR+** card support for opener's major.
- **Game forcing values with less than 16** points in support of partner's suit (with more, choose another action).
- **A singleton or void in the suit bid**

How does responder splinter? Responder can splinter by making a double jump in a new suit after partner opens one of a major.

Here are the possible bids:

| Opener | Responder |
|---------|---|
| 1 Spade | 4 Club, 4 Diamond, 4 Heart (All splinter bids) |
| 1 Heart | 3 Spade, 4 Club, 4 Diamond (all splinter bids) |

Note that the jump to the four level is not needed as any kind of natural bid, so it is available for responder to convey some very useful information about his hand.

Why are splinters so valuable? Splinters are valuable because they help partners get to slam with fewer points than normally needed – based on precise information about distribution. If opener holds xxx in a side suit and partner shows a singleton in that suit, the deck gets smaller and the ten HCP that opponents hold in the suit will take at most one trick.

More importantly, splinters greatly assist opener in the job of re-evaluating her hand based on what partner has just conveyed. Here, the concept of "wasted values" is critical to your hand evaluation

Consider these hands:

| Opener | Responder A | Responder B |
|----------|-------------|-------------|
| ♠ AJ1074 | ♠ KQ65 | ♠ KQ 6 |
| ♥ A3 | ♥ K765 | ♥ K76 |
| ♦ KQ7 | ♦ A 854 | ♦ 6 |
| ♣ 932 | ♣ 6 | ♣ A854 |

You open 1♠. If partner holds the A hand, he will splinter by bidding 4♣. You are not annoyed by his splinter – instead you are quite happy. First, you know that your three losing clubs have turned into one losing trick. You realize that you have no wasted values in clubs. Also, since partner does not have club cards, he must have honors in the red suits – honors which fit perfectly with your hand. Your re-evaluation tells you that you should try for slam. You have only 26 HCP between the two hands, but slam looks pretty cold.

But look at responder hand B. When partner splinters in diamonds, you see that your ♦KQ are no longer worth 5 HCP – they are wasted values. While it is true that your ♦Q may be good for one pitch, partner has too many losing clubs to make slam. Let's say that partner had not splintered, but had bid Jacoby 2N, and then answered two keycards with the Queen to your keycard ask: you would likely bid slam missing only one keycard between the two hands. And you would have no chance. So, the splinter bid keeps you from even thinking about what would be a bad slam. So, with these guidelines in mind, let's look at a few hands.

Partner opens 1♠ and you hold

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| ♠K863 ♥AQT ♦7 ♣KT932 | Bid 4♦ , a splinter in support of spades. You have 12 HCP and two for distribution. If partner bids 4♣, though, you are happy to stop. This hand is a "textbook" splinter |
| ♠A863 ♥AQT ♦7 ♣AQT93 | Bid 2N (Jacoby) . Yes, you have a game forcing hand with a singleton diamond. But you have too much strength for a splinter. Partner, holding ♠KQT74♥J2♦KJT ♣KJ5 will assume she has the wrong hand for you, and will sign off. Keep your splinters limited |
| ♠QT853 2 ♥AT7 ♦— ♣KT93 | Bid 4♦ . You only have 9 HCP but you have six card support and a void. This is a game forcing hand. If partner has as little as ♠Kxxxx ♥Kx ♦xxxx ♣AQ you could take twelve tricks |
| ♠K86 ♥AQT3 ♦7 ♣KT932 | Bid 2♣ . You have an excellent hand, and you are very likely to want to play in spades. Still, a splinter requires four card trump support for partner. |

So, learn the basics of the splinter bid. Recognize when partner or the opponents are splintering. Focus on re-evaluating your hand once partner splinters. You will stay out of dangerous contracts and bid slams that others miss!