

Washington bridge league

We offer our thanks to Washington Bridge league as we, hereunder, present a copy from their 2011 Sep-Oct bulletin on Major Suit Raises by columnists > Ron Zucker and Shawn Stringer. Read original - [Here](#)

MAJOR SUIT RAISES - PART 1

Bidding is built around two key questions: 1) In which strain (suit or No Trump) do we want to play? and 2) At what level should we play?

This article is the first in a series of discussions of Major Suit Raises, and how to respond with support after partner opens 1 \heartsuit or 1 \spadesuit (1M –*One of a Major*). Responder's description of her hand will help opener to best answer the second question - how high can we safely bid? Responder is trying to relay to opener information about how to proceed, and to give opener an idea of how optimistic to be.

Though bidding systems will be mentioned, our focus in these articles will not be on the particular bidding system you use to respond, but will instead look at how responder determines what kind of raise his hand is worth. In a nutshell, we are talking about "hand evaluation." In later articles, we'll discuss how to convey the information to partner.

[*Note:* Many novices start out playing Standard American bidding, but many play or switch to Two Over One (2/1). The concepts that follow are relevant regardless of the bidding system you play. Sometimes the strength required for a particular bid may vary depending on the system played.]

When partner opens 1M, and you have 3 cards in that major, your first step is to count your High Card Points (HCP). Next, note the distribution (or shape) of your hand. Whether you are balanced or if you have void, singleton, or doubleton affects the value of your hand. This combination of HCP and distribution points is called "support points" and should be figured as follows:

- With 3 card trump support, count your HCP and add 3 points for a void,
- Add 2 points for a singleton, and add 1 point for a doubleton.
- Don't forget to downgrade your hand for singleton or doubleton honors that are likely to be worthless.

In the 2/1 System, there are four basic types of raises, all based on the value of responder's hand. These are detailed in the table below. This is one area where Standard American and 2/1 are different: playing 2/1, you show a single raise by first bidding 1NT and then taking partner back to the major. You show the constructive raise by immediately supporting the major. Note that if you play Standard American, the single and constructive raises are not separated out, so that a single raise covers a wider support point range

| Type of Raise | Message we are sending Partner | Support Point Value |
|--------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Single (or Simple) Raise | Unless you have a LOT of extra values we can only make a part score | 6 to 7 support points |
| Constructive Raise | If you have significant extra values we might have game | Invitational Raise |
| Invitational Raise | If you have more than a bare minimum opening bid we want to play in game | Good 10 to bad 12 support points |
| Game Forcing Raise | We probably can make game and might be able to make a slam | Good 12 or more support Points |

With these guidelines in mind, let's take a look at some hands. Partner opens 1 \heartsuit and you hold the following cards. How should you evaluate your hand? Note that we're not asking what bid to make. We'll discuss that in a later article. This is about how to evaluate your hand.

| Your Hand | Type of raise |
|------------------|---|
| K82/Q54/J8/87542 | Single - six support points. You can either count the J as one HCP or count the doubleton as 1 support point - but don't count it twice. |
| 8763/KQ7/KQT86/5 | Invitational - this is a great 10 HCP hand which evaluates up to 12 support points and which has a side suit as a source of tricks. |
| K763/KQ7/JT8/654 | Constructive - 9 HCP. no distribution points. In 2/1, this is a solid 2 \heartsuit bid. |
| JT52/T95/Q8/KJ53 | Single - 7 HCP. Remember not to double count doubleton or singleton honors. Note also that you should not bid 1 \spadesuit . "Support with support" and with a one bid hand, make it your priority to support partner's major |
| Q65/K63/A82/J753 | a balanced 10 HCP hand with no distribution points and no substance to any of your suits. |
| K962/A87/9/QT853 | Invitational - 9 HCP plus two distribution points makes this an invitational hand. Singletons in the hand with shorter trump are valuable to partner |

Remember that hands change in value based on the preceding bidding. While your hand may not look like much when you first sort it, you may have a great supporting hand for your partner. If you have 3 card trump support, don't muddy the water, don't delay and convey your support to partner as soon as you can within your bidding system.

In future articles, we will discuss related concepts, including opener's follow up bids to your single raise, responder's game forcing raises, and distinguishing between 3 and 4 or more card support.