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Bridge Bidding: The Next Step · Acol edition



CHAPTER 6

Splinters and Strong Raises

Showing a big fit for partner's major, and where your short suit is

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1. Big fits need more detail

In Book 1, a raise of partner's major to game showed four-card support and about 13 or more points. That covers a very wide range of hands. Opposite a good opening, some of them make a slam and some do not, and the raise to game does not tell opener which. This chapter adds two more descriptive ways to raise.

2. The splinter bid

A **double jump in a new suit** after partner opens 1♥ or 1♠ is a **splinter**: **four or more trumps**, about **13–15 points**, and a **singleton or void** in the suit you bid.
Over 1♥: 3♠, 4♣ or 4♦. Over 1♠: 4♣, 4♦ or 4♥.

Why is the short suit worth showing? Because it tells opener which of their cards are working. Opposite a singleton club, opener's ♣K-Q are probably wasted, but small clubs can be ruffed. Aces and kings in the **other** suits are what make slam.

♠ A 7 3 ♥ K J 8 5 ♦ K Q 6 4 2 ♣ 5	Partner opens 1♥. Four hearts, **13 points**, a singleton club: **4♣** (splinter).

Opener	Responder
♠ K Q 5	♠ A 7 3
♥ A Q 10 7 4	♥ K J 8 5
♦ A 8 5	♦ K Q 6 4 2
♣ 7 6	♣ 5

1♥ – 4♣: opener has no wasted club honours and good controls: slam is likely. Opener uses Blackwood (or Roman Key Card Blackwood, Chapter 7) and bids **6♥**. Only 28 points between the hands, but the club losers are ruffed.

Opener	Responder
♠ Q 5	♠ A 7 3
♥ A Q 10 7 4	♥ K J 8 5
♦ J 8 5	♦ K Q 6 4 2
♣ K Q 6	♣ 5

1♥ – 4♣: now opener's ♣K-Q are opposite a singleton and worth little. Opener signs off in **4♥**.

3. Strong raises without a short suit

With four-card support and **16 or more** points but no short suit, **bid a new suit first** (it is forcing), then **jump to game** in partner's major, or go straight to Blackwood. Bidding twice shows more than an immediate raise to game.

♠ A 5 ♥ K Q 7 4 ♦ A K J 6 3 ♣ Q 8	Partner opens 1♥. Four hearts and **19 points**: too strong for 4♥. Bid **2♦** first, then show the heart fit strongly on the next round.

> Many Acol players now use **2NT** over 1♥ or 1♠ as a game-forcing raise with four trumps (Jacoby 2NT), instead of the natural 2NT in Book 1. If you and your partner agree to play it, opener replies as in the Standard American edition: a new suit at the three level shows a singleton or void, 4 of the major a minimum, and 3 of the major extra values.

4. Summary

Your hand (partner opened 1♥ or 1♠)	Bid
Four trumps, 13–15, singleton or void	Splinter: double jump in the short suit
Four trumps, 13–15, no short suit	Raise to game
Four trumps, 16+	New suit first, then show the fit
Opener after a splinter, honours wasted in the short suit	Sign off in game
Opener after a splinter, good controls elsewhere	Look for slam

5. Test yourself

1. ♠ K 10 8 4
♥ A 6 2
♦ K Q J 5 3
♣ 4

Partner opens 1♠. What do you bid?

2. ♠ 5
♥ Q J 9 3
♦ A K 8 4
♣ K 10 6 3

Partner opens 1♥. What do you bid?

3. ♠ Q 9 6 2
♥ K 8 3
♦ A 7 4
♣ K J 5

Partner opens 1♠. What do you bid?

4. ♠ A Q 5
♥ K J 10 7 3
♦ A 8 4
♣ 9 3

You opened 1♥. Partner bids 4♣ (splinter). What now?

5. ♠ Q 5
♥ A K J 7 3
♦ J 8 4
♣ K Q 6

You opened 1♥. Partner bids 4♣ (splinter). What now?

6. ♠ A 5
♥ K Q 7 4
♦ A K J 6 3
♣ Q 8

Partner opens 1♥. What do you bid?

Answers

1. 4♣. A splinter: four spades, 13 points, a singleton club.

2. 3♠. A splinter over 1♥: four hearts and a singleton spade.

3. 4♠. Four trumps, 13 points, no short suit: the raise to game.

4. Look for slam (4NT). No wasted club honours, and aces in both the other side suits.

5. 4♥. 16 points is more than a minimum, but ♣K-Q are opposite a singleton and will take few tricks. Without them you have only 11 useful points: sign off.

6. 2♦. Too strong for 4♥: bid a new suit first, then show the heart fit.

Next: Chapter 7, Roman Key Card Blackwood. Free lessons and challenge hands to play: **bridgescorer.com/learn**

About this guide. There are many versions of Acol, and clubs, teachers and books do not all agree on every detail. This chapter describes one common, straightforward version for learners. We do not claim it is the only or the best way: if your teacher or club plays something different, follow them. What matters most is that you and your partner agree.

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