

WINNING BRIDGE CONVENTIONS

CONVENTIONS AFTER A MAJOR SUIT OPENING

Patty Tucker



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Major Suit Raise Structure

The goal for players making revisions to their major suit raise system should be to create a system that provides them opportunities to:

- With very weak (less than 6 points) hands and long trumps, safely and systemically accelerate the bidding attempting to create problems for the opponents who might be interested in entering the bidding;
- With weak (6-9 points, non-invitational) hands and minimum (3) trumps, bid safely;
- With weak (6-9 points, non-invitational) hands and long (4+) trumps, safely and systemically accelerate the bidding and create problems for the opponents who might be interested in entering the bidding ;
- With invitational hands (10-12 points), differentiate between three-card and four-card or longer raises;
- With invitational hands (10-12 points), in response to a third or fourth hand opening bid:
 - Differentiate between three-card and four-card or longer raises;
 - Differentiate between balanced and unbalanced hands; and

- Investigate game safely and systemically.
- With game-forcing hands (12+ points) differentiate between:
 - Balanced and unbalanced hands;
 - Hands with 3 card and 4+ card raises; and
 - Minimum game-forcing hands and game-forcing hands interested in exploring slam.

All of the bids in this volume were chosen to address each of the criteria listed above. Playing an aggressive style of bidding will serve you well in duplicate bridge. Adding conventions that are well structured will provide a safety net which will allow you to bid aggressively with both weak hands and strong hands.

These conventions were picked for that purpose. When played together, they will provide a comprehensive system...aggressive yet safe and structured... that will cover the majority of hands you might hold when raising opener's major. Here is an overview of what the raise structure will look like:

With the addition of Forcing NT and Bergen Raises, your non-game forcing major suit raise structure will change. When Responder has a fit for the major suit opened and Responder is an un-passed hand (i.e. Responder has not previously had an opportunity to bid):

- A raise to the two-level will be used to show 3 trumps and 6-9 points;
- A Bergen Raise will be used to show 4+ trumps with 6-9 points;
- A Bergen Raise will be used to show 4+ trumps and 10-12 points;
- An immediate raise to the three-level will show 4+ trumps, less than 6 points and, if vulnerable, some shape (a singleton or a second 5-card suit);
- An immediate raise to the four-level will show 5+ trumps, a singleton and less than 6 points. A “weak freak”; and
- A bid of 1NT, followed by a jump raise to the three-level of Opener’s major suit, will be used to show 10-12 points and three trumps.

When Responder has a fit for the major suit opened and Responder is a passed hand (i.e. Responder previously had an opportunity to bid and passed):

- A raise to the two-level will be used to show 3+ trumps and 6-9 points;
- Drury will be used to show 3 trumps with 10-12 points;
- Drury will be used to show 4+ trumps and 10-12 points;

- An immediate raise to the three-level will show 4+ trumps, less than 6 points and, if vulnerable, some shape (a singleton or a second 5-card suit);
- An immediate raise to the four-level will show 5+ trumps, a singleton and less than 6 points. A “weak freak”; and
- A single jump in a new suit will be a “Mini-Splinter” showing 4+ trumps, a singleton in the suit bid and 9 - 11 HCPs.

Help Suit Game Tries can be used to explore the possibility of bidding game. After a major suit raise has been established and one of the partnership feels that game may be possible, Help Suit Game Tries are a convention used to investigate game without committing to the four-level.

With the addition of Jacoby 2NT and Splinter Bids, you will have three ways to show partner a game forcing raise in their major. Two of the bids (Jacoby 2NT and a Splinter Bid) are immediate raises. The third is made by bidding a new suit and then showing a game forcing raise. This is called a “delayed raise”.

Which of these game forcing raises would you use?

In general:

- Bidding a new suit is used when you have a game forcing hand and:
 - Only three cards in Opener's major; or
 - A good second suit to tell partner about and feel that the knowledge will be useful to partner in deciding whether to bid slam; or
 - A hand with shortness that does not fit the point range described by an immediate Splinter Bid.
- Jacoby 2NT promises 4+ trumps and is typically used with a balanced hand that has game forcing (13+ points) values.
- A Splinter Bid promises 4+ trumps and is an unbalanced "weakish" (10-13 points) game forcing raise.

Bergen Raises

Bergen Raises

Bergen Raises were invented by Marty Bergen as a result of a growing recognition among bridge players that more trumps, means more tricks. Bergen is bid by an unpassed Responder after partner has opened a major and right-hand opponent has passed. (Some players agree to play Bergen in other situations and that is discussed in the “Additional Notes” at the end of this section.) In general, hands with 9+ trumps play better since:

- Transportation is easier;
- Trumping losers is safer; and
- Pulling trumps is easier.

It is a very simple convention. After an opening bid of either 1♥ or 1♠, Responder will:

- Bid 3♣ to show 4+ trumps and 6-9 points;
- Bid 3♦ to show 4+ trumps, typically a balanced hand (otherwise responder might have made a Splinter Bid) and 10-12 points; or
- Bid 3♥ or 3♠, to show 4+ trumps and less than 6 points.

After Responder's raise, Opener has many options for his rebid.

- On hands that Opener feels that game is impossible he will simply bid his major suit at the three-level – 3♥ or 3♠.
- On hands that Opener has the values for game, Opener will bid game – 4♥ or 4♠.
- On hands that Opener is close to the values for game but has no game try available, Opener will bid game – 4♥ or 4♠.
- On hands that Opener feels that game is possible and there is a suit(s) between Responder's bid and the three-level of his major, he will make a game try. A game try can be made by bidding any suit other than trumps, as long as his bid is below the three-level of the trump suit.

When deciding whether or not game is possible Opener should consider:

- The number of trumps held by the partnership;
- His high card points;
- His distribution;
- Any competitive edge he might gain by bidding (or not bidding); and

- The location of his high card points. *(Remember, high card points concentrated in Opener's long suits are more valuable than high card points scattered throughout his hand.)*

Let's look at some hands opener might hold:

Opener's Hand

1) ♠Q32 ♥AQ872 ♦AQ65 ♣3 – Opener bids 1♥

Responder bids 3♣ showing 4+ trumps and 6-9 points.

Opener would rebid 3♦, a game try. With a singleton, 14 HCPs and points concentrated in his long suits (hearts and diamonds), Opener will believe that game is possible.

2) ♠Q32 ♥AQ872 ♦AQ65 ♣3 – Opener bids 1♥

Responder bids 3♦ showing 4+ trumps, typically balanced and 10-12 points.

Opener would rebid 4♥, game. With a singleton and 14 HCPs Opener will be very optimistic that his partnership holds the values to make game.

3) ♠Q32 ♥AQ872 ♦AQ65 ♣3 – Opener bids 1♥

Responder bids 3♥ showing 4+ trumps and less than 6 points.

Opener would pass. Opener will be happy to play below game as their partnership cannot hold more than 19 HCPs.

4) ♠2 ♥AQ872 ♦AQ654 ♣Q3 – Opener bids 1♥

Responder bids 3♥ showing 4+ trumps and less than 6 points.

Opener would bid 4♥. Their partnership cannot hold more than 19 HCPs. However, Opener suspects that the opponents have a substantial (9+) number of spades between their two hands and at least 21 HCPs. Bidding 4♥ is a “two-way bid”. (You have two scenarios in which bidding will be to your advantage.) You might make 4♥, if the distribution and opponents’ high cards are favorable for your side. If not, the opponents would probably be able to make 4♠ and bidding 4♥ may keep them silent.

5) ♠AKJ92 ♥A872 ♦KJ2 ♣3 – Opener bids 1♠

Responder bids 3♦ showing 4+ trumps, typically balanced and 10-12 points.

Opener would rebid 4♠, game. With a singleton and 16 HCPs Opener knows they have the values to make game.

6) ♠AKJ92 ♥A872 ♦QJ2 ♣3 – Opener bids 1♠

Responder bids 3♣ showing 4+ trumps, typically balanced and 6-9 points.

Opener would rebid 3♦, a Help Suit Game Try. With a singleton and 15 HCPs opener knows they are close to the values for game and will investigate whether his partner's hand fits well with his hand.

7) ♠AKJ92 ♥AQ72 ♦KJ2 ♣3 – Opener bids 1♠

Responder bids 3♠ showing 4+ trumps and less than 6 points. Opener would rebid 4♠, game. With a singleton and 18 HCPs Opener knows they don't have the high card values to bid game, however, the trick taking ability of the hands is very high.

8) ♠AKJ92 ♥A972 ♦K52 ♣3 – Opener bids 1♠

Responder bids 3♠ showing 4+ trumps and less than 6 points.

Opener would Pass. With a singleton and 15 HCPs Opener knows they don't have the high card values to bid game. While if Responder's hand fits well game may make, Opener has no method to find out how well their hands fit.

9) ♠AKJ92 ♥AJ752 ♦32 ♣3 – Opener bids 1♠

Responder bids 3♣ showing 4+ trumps and 6-9 points.

Opener would bid 3♥ a Help Suit Game Try. With a singleton, a good second four-card suit and 13 HCPs Opener knows they don't have the high card values to bid game, however, the trick taking potential of the hand if partner has help in hearts is tremendous.

10) ♠AKJ92 ♥KQ72 ♦2 ♣AQ3 – Opener bids 1♠

Responder bids 3♦ showing 4+ trumps and 10-12 points.

Opener would bid 4♣, a cuebid of the ♣A. With a singleton and 19 HCPs Opener knows they have the high card values to bid game and that slam is possible. Opener is hoping that Responder will show the ♥A by bidding 4♥. If Responder bids 4♠, Opener will pass. If Responder bids 4♦, Opener will bid 4♥, showing the ♥K.

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Bridge students quickly discover that 'basic bidding' will only get them so far. To improve it is necessary to master a certain number of bidding conventions, and be prepared both to play them and to play against them. Each of the books in this series covers a number of useful conventions, explaining them carefully along with numerous examples and quizzes to help the reader understand what is being learned.

Included in this book: Bergen Raises, Help Suit Game Tries, Splinter Bids, 1NT Forcing, Jacoby 2NT and Drury.



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