

RESPONDING TO PARTNER'S OPENING BID OF ONE OF A MAJOR

When you first start to learn Acol bidding, you are taught that, when partner opens one of a major, your responses are as follows, when you have at least four card support:

1♠ - (pass) - 2♠ shows 6 – 9 points

1♠ - (pass) - 3♠ shows 10 – 12 points

1♠ - (pass) - 4♠ shows 13 – 15 points.

When evaluating your hand, as you have found a fit, you can add on distributional points to your high card points. One conservative scheme is to add on one point for a doubleton; two points for a singleton; and three points for a void. The reason for this is that the defence cannot run the suit in which dummy is short, before declarer ruffs in.

Improved techniques have been developed when partner opens 1♥ or 1♠ and you have at least four card support and 13+ points. The two techniques that we will be looking at are:

- Splinter bids;
- The Jacobi 2NT response.

Splinter Bids

A double jump in a new suit shows enough points for game, at least four card support for the suit opened, and a singleton or void in the suit bid.

List of splinter bids

1♥ - (pass) - 4♣ shows a singleton or void in clubs;

1♥ - (pass) - 4♦ shows a singleton or void in diamonds;

1♥ - (pass) - 3♠ shows a singleton or void in spades;

1♠ - (pass) - 4♣ shows a singleton or void in clubs;

1♠ - (pass) - 4♦ shows a singleton or void in diamonds;

1♠ - (pass) - 4♥ shows a singleton or void in hearts;

All of the above bids show at least four card support for the suit opened and a hand worth a game opposite a minimum opener.

Note that the singleton should not be an ace or a king.

These bids can help opener decide if there is a chance of a slam.

What should opener have to consider a slam?

The first thing to notice is that three or four small cards in the suit splintered is a good thing, as is the ace and two or three small cards. The worse possible holding is KQJ, which could generate two tricks, no matter what responder had in that suit.

In order to decide whether or not to bid on, carry out the following. Count up your points excluding the king, queen and jack of partner's short suit, but add on points for distribution and long suits. If you reach 15, then consider exploring for a slam, either by cue-bidding or using Blackwood.

Example 1

You hold the following hand:

♠ A Q J 6 3
♥ K 5
♦ A 2
♣ 7 6 4 3

You open the bidding with 1♠ and partner makes a splinter bid of 4♣. You have no wasted points in clubs, 14 HCP and 2 distributional points, giving a total of 16. You cue bid 4♦ to show first round control in diamonds, and if partner bids 4♥ to show first round control in hearts, you can use Roman Key Card Blackwood to ask for controls and possibly go for slam.

Example 2

You hold the following hand:

♠ A Q J 6 3
♥ 8 5
♦ A 2
♣ Q J 7 2

You open the bidding with 1♠ and partner makes a splinter bid of 4♣. Although this has the same point count as example 1, the three points in clubs (partner's short suit) should be ignored. The hand has 11 HCP and 2 distribution points, giving a sum of 13, and therefore you sign off with 4♠.

Splinters are a useful aid to bidding slams, which often depend for their success on distribution. Although they might appear complicated, the difficult part is for opener to re-evaluate their hand once partner has made a splinter bid.

The Jacoby 2NT Response

When partner opens one of a major, then a bid of 2NT from responder shows at least four card support for the major and enough points for game, say 13+, including distribution. Note however that this bid denies a singleton or void. With such a hand, responder would splinter. As the 2NT bid is artificial, it should be alerted. The bid is forcing to game.

Opener's rebid describes their hand further.

If the opening bid has been 1♥ or 1♠, and responder has bid 2NT, then opener's rebids are as follows:

- [1] With a minimum hand (11-14) with no singleton or void, bid 4 of the major;
- [2] With a second suit of 5+ length, bid four of the new suit;
- [3] With a void or singleton, bid it at the three level;
- [4] With 5+ cards in the opening major and 15+ points, rebid the major at the 3 level;
- [5] With a balanced 15-16 points bid 3NT.

Responder will then be in a position to consider bidding a slam or not.

Note that a five card suit has priority over a singleton or void.

QUIZ

The bidding has started off, 1♠ - (pass) – 2NT, what do you rebid with the following hands

(A)

♠	A Q 10 5 2	♥	7 3	♦	A Q 10 6 4	♣	2
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(B)

♠	A K 5 4 3	♥	A Q	♦	A 3 2	♣	5 3 2
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(C)

♠	K Q J 4	♥	J 3	♦	K 8 7 4	♣	A Q 9
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(D)

♠	Q J 9 8 7	♥	3	♦	K Q 8 2	♣	A 6 5
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(E)

♠	K Q 9 8 2	♥	J 7 3	♦	A Q J	♣	3 2
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(F)

♠	A 6 5 3 2	♥	K J 6 2	♦	A Q 8 2	♣	
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(G)

♠	A Q J 7 3	♥	J 6	♦	A	♣	Q J 10 6 2
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