

Splinter Bids

By Warren Watson

Last Revised January 10th, 2018

<http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/aaBidding/SplinterBids.pdf>

Splinters are a Must

A splinter says that any high cards in that suit are not working. "Any time the auction tells you that all of your high cards are working you should be optimistic" ...
A splinter can be much more effective than intense and extensive cuebidding.

From Mike Lawrence's Book on Hand Evaluation p 71-76

Rule of 27:

With no Wasted Honours and a fit, only 27 HCP's are needed for slam when there is a singleton

Reason: The deck becomes a 34 point deck.

Missing an Ace and King from 40 is 33 and missing Ace and King from 34 is 27.

Examples:

♠AKxxx ♥Axx ♦Kx ♣xxx
♠Qxxx ♥KQxx ♦Axxx ♣x

That was 25.

♠AKxxx ♥Axx ♦Kx ♣xxx
♠QJxx ♥QJxx ♦AQJxx ♣x

That was 27 and responder was quacky

♠AKxxx ♥Axx ♦Kx ♣xxx
 ♠QJxx ♥KQJxx♦QJxx ♣J

This makes 5 because responder does not have 13 HCP counting the J♣ as zero

Shortness Points		
	Declarer Points	Dummy Points
	Long Trump Hand or three-card support	Short-Trump Hand with four-card support
Doubleton	1	1
Singleton	2	3
Void	3	5

Definition of a Standard Splinter:

1♥ followed by 3♠, 4♣, 4♦

1♠ followed by 4♣, 4♦, 4♥

12 to a bad 15 points with four-card support

With a good 15 points or more use Jacoby 2NT to give more room for slam exploration

This is a valuable tool to find a cheaper slam

One does not splinter with a singleton Ace, King or Queen because partner will wrongly discredit any honour he has in the suit.

Response to a Splinter:

With Axxx or xxxx in the splinter suit, make a cuebid even with a minimum

With K or Q in the splinter suit, bid game

With a Quacky minimum, also bid game

Splinters

1♣ P 3♦

1♣ P 3♥

1♣ P 3♠

1♦ P 3♥

1♦ P 3♠

1♦ P 4♣

1♥ P 3♠

1♥ P 4♣

1♥ P 4♦

1♠ P 4♣

1♠ P 4♦

1♠ P 4♥

1♣ P 1♥ P

4♣ 6 clubs and four hearts

1♣ P 1♥ P

4♦ four hearts and diamond shortness

1♥ P 1♠ P
4♦ four spades and diamond shortness

1♣ P 1♠ P
3♦ splinter same strength as jumping to 3♠
Standard meaning is a jump shift

1♦ P 1♠ P
3♥ splinter same strength as jumping to 3♠
Standard meaning is a jump shift

1♦ P 1♠ P
4♥ splinter but GF, same strength as jumping to 4♠

1♣ P 1♠ P
2♠ P 4♦ enough for game, an opener as well, and ♦ shortness

1♠ P 2♣ P
2♠ P 4♦ diamond shortness and three spades.

1♦ P 1♥ P
2♥ P 4♦ enough for game, an opener as well, and ♦ shortness

1♦ P 2♦ P
3♥ Splinter

Delayed splinter

1♣ P 1♥ 1♠
1NT P 3♠ P spade shortness and club support

Self Splinter

1♠ P 2♠ P
4♣

Splinter in 2/1 Auctions

Shows no extra values, but splinters allow one to make an assessment of what HCP's are working.

1♥ P 2♣ P
3♦ four clubs and diamond shortness

Splinters in No Trump Auctions

1N P 2♦ P
2♥ P 3♠ six hearts and spade shortness

1N P 2♣ P
2♥ P 4♦ four hearts and diamond shortness

Splinters in Competition

W	N	E	S
1♥	2♣	P	3♥
		P	P
1♥	1♠	2♥	4♣

heart shortness and four clubs

four spades and club shortness

Minisplinters

I insist on all minisplinters and splinters because they are so effective.

Minisplinters show:

- four-card support
- 10-12 points. (HCP's + 135 distribution points)
- shortness in the suit bid
- not a stiff honour
- Jacks can be treated as a spot card if not in the hand's point total.

1♥ 2♠

1♠ 3♣

1♥ 3♣

1♠ 3♦

1♥ 3♦

1♠ 3♥

The answer to a minisplinter is simple:

- With wasted honours sign off in 3M
- With no wasted honours, AxXX or XXxx, bid game, 4M.

Board 1 Delicate Handling of Ruffs

North Dealer None Vulnerable

♠AK876 ♥KQ103 ♦3 ♣543
♠--- ♥J765 ♦K765 ♣KJ1098 
♠5432 ♥4 ♦QJ109 ♣AQ76
♠QJ109 ♥A982 ♦A842 ♣2

N	E	S	W
1♠	P	4♣	Dbl
4NT	P	5♠	P
6♠	All Pass		

Opening Lead: ♦Q

Analysis:

When you have no wasted values, the King or Queen, opposite partner's singleton or void, make a slam attempt by cuebidding. Because of the singleton ♦, North goes right to Keycard Blackwood. With Axxx or xxxx opposite x, one needs 27 (34-8+1=27) points for slam. If this occurs in two suits (28-8+1 = 21), 21 points are needed for slam excluding the KQJ in the two singleton suits.

It is commonly known (I hope) that one tries not to lead a suit in which an opponent (declarer or dummy) has a singleton. It may set up discards for declarer and you can get at most one winner in the suit.

The double of a splinter, therefore, is not for lead direction. It tells partner, one may be willing to make a sacrifice in the suit if partner is.

Declarer Play: Lose a club and ruff two clubs while drawing trump. Only ruff in the long trump hand once. Play the person with long trump for short ♥'s.

Board 2 Wasted Values

East Dealer North South Vulnerable

♠987652 ♥54 ♦K10 ♣A87
♠--- ♥J1098 ♦AQ54 ♣KQJ109
♠AQ10 ♥32 ♦J9876 ♣654

N E S W
1♥ P 3♠
P 4♥ All Pass

Opening Lead: ♥3 (I won't quarrel with ♦9 though I do not like tenace leads)

Analysis:

East has lots of wasted ♠ values. He does not cuebid or use Keycard. He goes to game, muttering under his breath, that he hopes he makes game.

Declarer will set up ♣'s to pitch losers (one ♦ and two ♠'s) and will ruff two ♠'s in dummy.

Board 3 Splinter Over A Minor

South Dealer East West Vulnerable

♠AQ10 ♥Q54 ♦QJ10987 ♣2
 ♠9876 ♥10987 ♦3 ♣QJ109 
 ♠5432 ♥K6 ♦2 ♣K87543

♠KJ ♥AJ32 ♦AK654 ♣A6

N	E	S	W
		1♦ P	
4♣	Dbl	4NT	5♣
Dbl	P	6♦	All Pass

Dbl is 1 or 4 keycards

Opening Lead: safe ♦3

Analysis:

East doubles saying a ♣ sacrifice may be possible and West likes ♣'s so he bids 5♣ to interfere over keycard Blackwood. When they interfere directly over Blackwood, we have DOP1 at our disposal. I prefer 1430 DOP1.

		Std DOP1	1430 DOP1
DOP1	Double	zero keycards	or 1 or 4 keycards
	Pass	one keycard	or 3 or 0 keycards
	Next step up	two keycards	or 2 or 5 without the Queen
	Next step up	three keycards	or 2 or 5 with the Queen
	Next step up	four keycards, etc	

Declarer Play: You do not have the ten so do not run the ♥Queen through. Play small to the Jack and cash the Ace.

Board 4 Opener Splinters

West Dealer Both Vulnerable

♠876 ♥A3 ♦A765 ♣QJ106
♠AK54 ♥KQ54 ♦3 ♣AK54 
♠32 ♥10987 ♦KQJ109 ♣32

♠QJ109 ♥J62 ♦842 ♣987

N	E	S	W
			1♣
P	1♥	P	4♦
P	4♠	All Pass	

Opening Lead: ♠Queen

Analysis:

When East has a full opener, he has the liberty of describing his hand accurately, bidding his longest suit first then his next suit. However, with 6-9 points he will skip a diamond suit to bid a four-card major.

West splinters showing a singleton or void in ♦'s with enough values opposite a mere six to make game.

East has lots of wasted values and just bids game.

Win the opening lead and play a ♦. To play the heart suit, play 10 (South will duck smoothly) to the King (North should also duck smoothly) and if it loses finesse the Jack. If it wins, come back to your hand and lead up to the Queen, guessing whether to duck or play the Queen. Hopefully South's card will help.

Board 5 Splinter After Two-Over-One

North Dealer NS Vulnerable

♠1092 ♥AK543 ♦--- ♣AQ765
 ♠Q7654 ♥109872 ♦AK3 ♣---  E ♠J83 ♥6 ♦QJ10942 ♣432
 ♠AK ♥QJ ♦8765 ♣KJ1098

N	E	S	W
1♥	P	2♣	P
3♦	Dbl	4NT	P
5NT	P	7♣	7♦
P	P	Dbl	All Pass

Opening Lead: If South was on lead, ♠King then ♠Ace (opposite way shows doubleton AK) then ♥Queen to the ♥Ace then a ♠ by North for a ruff.

If North on lead, ♥Ace.

Analysis:

5NT is two keycards with a void. Who thinks the void is not the Splinter suit? No one. Good.

East doubles 3♦ not for a lead but as a possible place to sacrifice. Doubles of artificial bids are lead-directive except the double of shortness. It is understood, leading opponent's short suit is bad defense.

West does not bid 5♦ to interfere with Keycard because the opponent's play DOP1 and interference does not bother them and 5♦ will just force them to slam. Over 7♦ West will save because he ignores the rule that only Jesus saves.

Result:

7♦Ex-4 -800

7♦Wx-3 -500 (do not get a ♠ ruff)

7♣S= 1500 + 500 +140 +2140

Board 6 Self Splinter

East Dealer East West Vulnerable

♠J ♥87654 ♦KQJ10 ♣543
♠10932 ♥QJ ♦9764 ♣KQ2  ♠AK87654 ♥AK32 ♦3 ♣A

♠Q ♥109 ♦A852 ♣J109876

N	E	S	W
1♠	P	2♠	
P	4♦	P	4NT

1 or 4 keycards P 5♣ P 6♠

All Pass

Opening Lead: ♦ Ace to reel in an overtrick and East does not have a ♦ honour for his splinter.

Analysis:

East cannot splinter into a suit with a stiff AK or Q. If he splinters into ♣'s, West will not try for slam with his 5 points in ♣'s.

Result:

6♠E= +1430

Board 7 A Delayed Splinter

South Dealer Both Vulnerable

♠QJ10 ♥--- ♦Q109854 ♣5432
♠A654 ♥876 ♦KJ3 ♣AQ10 
♠A654 ♥876 ♦KJ3 ♣AQ10 ♠K987 ♥AKQ54 ♦2 ♣987

♠32 ♥J10932 ♦A76 ♣KJ6

N	E	S	W
			1♣
P	1♥	P	1♠
P	4♦	P	4♠ All Pass

Opening Lead: ♠Queen There is no future except discards for declarer if you lead the Splinter suit.

Analysis:

East splinters showing enough combined values for game because an opener plus an opener leads to a No Trump or a major suit game. West has wasted values and signs off in game.

Declarer does not need the club finesse if ♥'s behave but they don't. Finesse to the ♣10 then the ♣Queen. Draw two rounds of trump and lead up to ♥'s twice while taking the ♣ finesse.

South will duck a ♦ smoothly.

Board 8 Splinter After Jacoby Transfer

West Dealer None Vulnerable

♠10987 ♥2 ♦AKJ6 ♣QJ76
♠AK65 ♥AK65 ♦532 ♣K10 
♠QJ2 ♥QJ10987 ♦4 ♣A98

♠43 ♥43 ♦Q10987 ♣5432

N	E	S	W
			1N
P	2♦	P	2♥
P	4♦	P	4NT
P	5♣	P	6♥

Opening Lead: ♦A then ♠10

Analysis:

No Trump opener rarely becomes the captain. Here he is. Also with mild slam tries and with splinters over Stayman.

Board 9 Splinter After Stayman

North Dealer East West Vulnerable

♠AKQ ♥A1065 ♦K43 ♣654
♠J10987 ♥987 ♦87 ♣AK8  ♠6543 ♥32 ♦J109 ♣QJ109
♠2 ♥KQJ4 ♦AQ652 ♣732

N	E	S	W
1NT	P	2♣	P
2♥	P	3♠	P
4♥	All Pass		

Opening Lead: ♣Queen, Declarer will be unlikely to get discards on a ♣ suit but he may on a ♦ lead.

Analysis:

With King or Queen in the splinter suit, one discourages any more slam attempts.

Board 10

Keycard Gerber

East Dealer Both Vulnerable

♠65432 ♥--- ♦765 ♣87542
♠A ♥A432 ♦AKQJ1098 ♣3
♠QJ10 ♥KQ87 ♦432 ♣AK6

♠K987 ♥J10965 ♦--- ♣QJ109

	N	E	S	W
	1NT	P	2♣	
	P	2♥	P	4♣ 1430 Gerber
	P	4NT	P	5♣ asking for # of Kings
1 King	P	5♥	P	7NT

Opening Lead: ♣Queen

Analysis:

You can count 13 tricks, bid 7NT so you are not at the mercy of a bad trump split or an opening lead ruff.