

Splinters

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

This is from the book Two Over One Fourth Edition.

40.3 Splinters

1M	4♣	1M	4♦	1♥	3♠	1♠	4♥
1m	3♥	1m	3♠	1♣	3♦	1♦	4♣
1♣	1M	1M	2♣	1♠	2m	1♥	2m
4♦		3♦		3♥		3♠	
1♠	2♠	1♠	2♠	1♥	2♥	1♥	2♥
4m		4♥		3♠		4m	

“M” is a major and “m” is a minor.

40.3.1 In General

A splinter says that any high cards from the King to the Jack in that suit are not working. If that shortness is a void, then the Ace is also wasted. If a player runs to Notrump after his partner splinters, any slam aspirations disappear. The shortness is opposite significant wasted values. Example 26.3 is an example of wasted honours shown by a 1NT overcall.

“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 cuebidding¹.”

¹ Lawrence, Mike, *Hand Evaluation*, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA: Max Hardy Publications, 1983. pages 71 to 76.

The Rule of Twenty-Seven

Fact: With no wasted honours and a fit, only 27 HCP are needed for small slam when there is a singleton. The reason is that the deck becomes a 34-point deck.

With a full deck of 40, 33 is needed because $40 - 8$ (two Aces) $+ 1 = 33$. With a void and no wasted values, it is a 30-point deck and 23 HCP are needed for small slam.

Splinters are a valuable tool to find a cheaper slam, and minisplinters are a valuable tool to find cheaper games as well as slams.

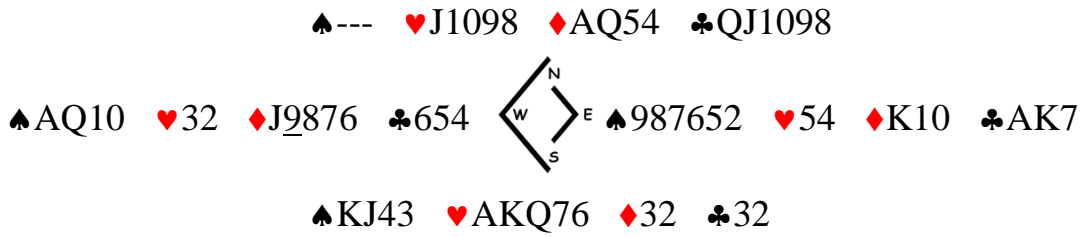
The key to splinters, is that with values in partner's shortness, a player signs off, and with Axxx or xxxx in his partner's shortness, a cuebid is automatically made.

Example 40.2: Enough for Slam?

♠AK532	♥A32	♦K4	♣952	
♠Q764	♥KQ54	♦A765	♣7	25 is needed for 6♠
♠AK532	♥A32	♦K4	♣952	
♠QJ76	♥QJ5	♦AQJ53	♣7	A quacky 27 makes 6♠
♠AK532	♥A32	♦K4	♣Q52	
♠QJ76	♥KQJ54	♦QJ5	♣J	A quacky 29 needed for 5♠

Example 40.3: Wasted Values

E-W vul.



W	N	E	S
			1♥
P	3♠	P	4♥
all pass			

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

The declarer sets up clubs to pitch losers (one diamond and two spades) and ruffs two spades in the dummy. On a diamond lead, South makes +420. On anything else, he makes +450.

40.3.2 Splinters after an Opening

1♣ followed by 3♦, 3♥, 3♠

1♥ followed by 3♠, 4♣, 4♦

1♦ followed by 3♥, 3♠, 4♣

1♠ followed by 4♣, 4♦, 4♥

These are double jump shifts, showing:

- Enough for game (Add an Ace or a King for a minor game).
 - 10 to 13 HCP with a singleton.
 - 8 to 11 HCP with a void.
- Four-card support (five for over a minor)
- Not a singleton Ace, King or Queen because partner will wrongly discredit any honour he has in the suit. A singleton Jack is not included in the HCP total. Jacks and 10's are either spot cards or honours depending on the situation.

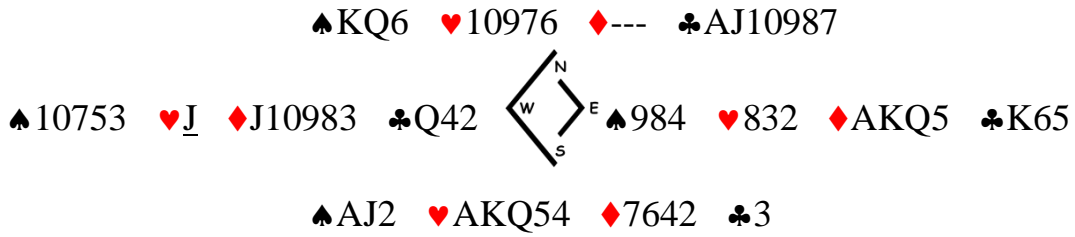
With a good 16 points or more, the responder should choose to use Jacoby 2NT over a major to give more room for slam exploration.

Responses:

- With Axxx or xxxx in the splinter suit, opener makes a cuebid even with a minimum.
- With the King or the Queen in the splinter suit, opener signs off in game.

Example 40.4: A Splinter Grand

Neither vul.



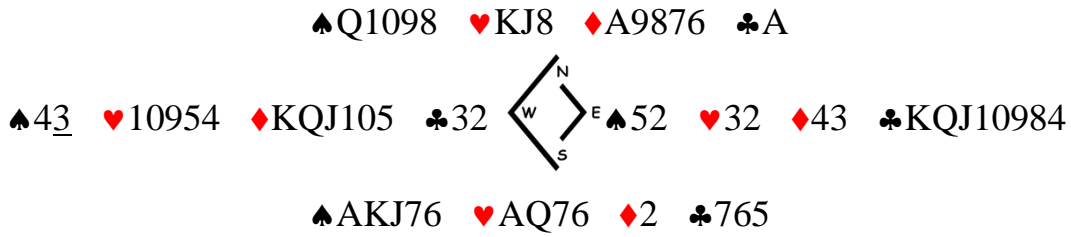
W	N	E	S
			1♥
P	4♦	P	4♠
P	5♣	P	6♣
P	6♦	P	7♥
all pass			

North splinters and shows first-round diamond control as well as first-round club control. At worst, grand is on a spade finesse, but North has to have points somewhere. Trump leads are often the best against a slam bid with the use of a splinter.

This was played twenty-three times in an ACBL speedball IMP tourney on BBO, and only six pairs were in a slam, five of whom were successful. The declarer, here, makes +1510.

Example 40.5: Too Strong to Splinter

E-W vul.



W	N	E	S
			1♠
P	2NT	3♣	3♦
P	4NT	P	5♦
P	5NT	P	6♥
P	7♠	all pass	

They have trump all sewn up, so the lead gives nothing away. The ♦King is fine. but the opponents have a singleton or void from the 3♦ bid.

North is too strong to splinter so he uses Jacoby 2NT. Furthermore, splinters are not done with a singleton Ace, King or Queen.

North did not even think of 7NT for a second. There are only eleven tricks in Notrump, but he does ask for specific Kings to show all six keycards in case South can bid 7NT. The declarer makes +1510.

40.3.3 Splinters in a Two Over One Auction

A jump shift, after a two over one response has been made, is a splinter showing:


- Four-card support.
- A singleton or void in the suit into which a jump is made.
- A minimum opener or better. May or may not have extra values.

W	N	E	S
		P	1♠
P	2♣	P	3♦

3♦ is a splinter in support of clubs.

Example 40.6: Another Splinter Grand

Both vul.

♠10	♥AQ743	♦Q5	♣AK863						
♠KQJ432	♥J962	♦93	♣J	♠875	♥85	♦107642	♣1042		
									
♠A96	♥K10	♦AKJ8	♣Q975						

W	N	E	S
	1♥	P	2♣
P	3♠	P	4NT
P	5♦	P	7♣
all pass			

This is similar to a hand that occurred in an ACBL speedball IMP tourney on BBO. It was played ninety-four times, and five pairs bid and made 7♣ for +2140 and +13.77 IMPs while 5♣ plus two was rewarded a loss of 7.46 IMPs.

3♠ is a splinter in support of clubs with at least four-card support and not necessarily holding extra values. South has an ideal spade holding opposite shortness and goes right to keycard. 7♣ is an easy bid after a splinter. Even if North does not have the ♦Queen, the ♦Jack and the ♦8 can probably be pitched on hearts.

40.3.4 Other Splinters

- A **double jump shift** over a minor is also a splinter.

1♦	3♥, 3♠, 4♣
1♣	3♦, 3♥, 3♠

- A splinter by the opener.

W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
1♥	P	1♠	P	1♦	P	2♦	P
4♦				3♥			

- Minisplinters by the opener are the same strength as jumping to 3♠. They are not common because they may cause confusion.

W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
1♣	P	1♠	P	1♦	P	1♠	P
3♦				3♥			

A jump reverse into a real suit can be shown with a simple reverse. They are more useful as jump shifts. The following are also jump shifts (18+), not delayed minisplinters.

W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
1♦	P	1♠	P	1♥	P	1♠	P
3♣				3♦			

- Minisplinters by the responder are the same strength as jumping to 3♠.

W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
1♠	P	3m	P	1♠	P	3♥	P

- Delayed Splinters:

W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
1♣	P	1♠	P	1♠	P	2♣	P
2♠	P	4♦		2♠	P	4♦	

East, on the right, shows three spades and diamond shortness.

W	N	E	S
1♣	P	1♥	1♠
2♣	P	3♠	

East has spade shortness and three or more clubs.

- Self Splinter

W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
1♠	P	2♠	P	1♠	P	2♠	P
4m				4♥			

- Splinters in Notrump auctions.

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

- Splinters in Competition

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

It should be noted that when partner is an overcall, a jump cuebid can be one of the following and must be discussed with partner:


- A four-card limit raise or better
- A mixed raise, less than a limit and better than a weak hand
- A splinter.

- Six-Four Hands (anti splinters)

W	N	E	S		W	N	E	S
1♦	P	1♥	P		1♦	P	1♥	P
2♥	P	4♦			4♦			
six ♥s and four ♦s					four ♥s and six ♦s			

Example 40.7: 4♥ is a Delayed Splinter

Both vul.

		♠KQ42	♥---	♦42	♣AKJ10987			
♠8	♥ <u>8</u> 765432	♦K65	♣64		♠765	♥AKQ	♦9873	♣Q53
		♠AJ1093	♥J109	♦AQJ10	♣2			

	W	N	E	S
			P	1♠
	P	2NT	P	3♣
	P	4♥	P	4NT
	P	5♠	P	5NT
	P	7♠	all pass	

North uses Jacoby 2NT because he is too strong to splinter (15+). South shows club shortness which North likes because he shows a void in hearts. He plays it as a void because too much room is used if it is just a stiff.

It is a 1430 keycard sequence, and 5NT, asking for specific Kings, promises all six keycards which is all North needs to hear. Therefore, he bids 7♠.

If North is silly enough to try 7♣ not 7♠, does East double? Of course not. The only contract that can be defeated is never doubled. If North bids 7♣, East is happy they are where they are and passes.

To make 7♠, the declarer ruffs the heart opening lead and cashes the ♠Ace. He then cashes the ♣Ace and ruffs a club high. When both defenders follow, he cashes the top two spades in dummy and enjoys the clubs. The declarer can handle a four-one club break but not a five-zero club break.

If the ♥8 is not led, the dummy does not ruff the opening lead. The declarer then has the freedom to ruff a heart when trump are gone to get to the setup clubs.

40.3.5 Double Fits

Some feel that four-card support for partner's major opening must be shown right away through a limit raise, Jacoby 2NT or a splinter bid.

This is only the case when holding 6 to 9 points. Games and slams can be made with fewer points than expected when the following conditions occur:

- A nine-card fit or better
- Shortness and no wasted values
- A double fit

Sometimes, a player will forgo Jacoby 2NT to find out about secondary fits. It is harder to investigate secondary fits after support has been shown because bids of the side suits now show controls not length.

The obvious exception is the following bidding:

W	N	E	S
			1♠
P	2NT	P	4♦
P	4♠	all pass	

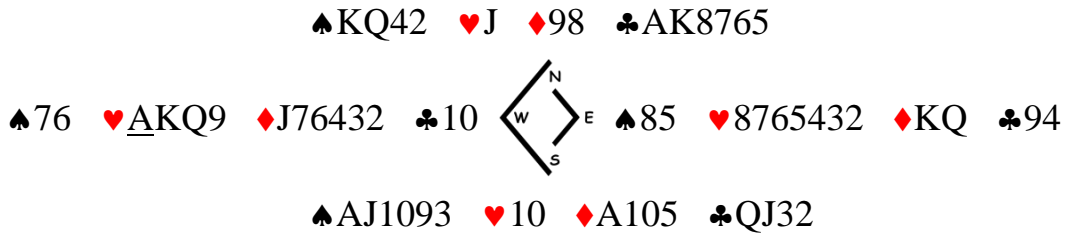
South has a singleton, but it is more important to show his partner a source of tricks in a good second five-card diamond suit.

Just a Side Note:

Typically, seven-level sacrifices often need a double fit usually at favourable vulnerability. See chapter thirty-four.

Example 40.8: Jacoby Not Always the Best

Neither vul.



With Jacoby 2NT:

W	N	E	S
		P!	1♠
P	2NT	P	3♥
P	4♣	P	4♦
P	4♠	all pass	

Jacoby 2NT may not even get the partnership to slam. Both players have heart shortness which is a duplication of assets. A diamond loser, a heart loser and a possible club loser make game seem high enough.

In Two Over One without Jacoby 2NT:

W	N	E	S
		P!	1♠
P	2♣	P	3♥
P	4♣	P	4♦
P	4NT	P	5♠
P	6♠	all pass	

3♥ is a splinter showing heart shortness and four clubs. North can use Blackwood once South shows a control in his worthless diamond doubleton. Slam is easy to get to in this double fit situation.

Minisplinters

A minisplinter is the best bid around, but is surprisingly not that common. Minisplinters like splinters (section 40.3) are very valuable in assessing whether shortness is good or not.

Minisplinters:

1 ♠	3 ♣	1 ♠	3 ♦	1 ♠	3 ♥
1 ♥	2 ♠	1 ♥	3 ♣	1 ♥	3 ♦

Full Splinters:

1 ♠	4 ♣	1 ♠	4 ♦	1 ♠	4 ♥
1 ♥	3 ♠	1 ♥	4 ♣	1 ♥	4 ♦

Minisplinters and Splinters have:

- A singleton or void in the suit bid
- Four-card trump support
- The following points including distribution (section 2.2.2)
 - Full splinters are a good 12 to 15 points
 - Minisplinters are 10 to a bad 12 points

With 16 points or more, Jacoby 2NT should be used to give more room for slam exploration. There are different treatments of splinters and minisplinters.

A.

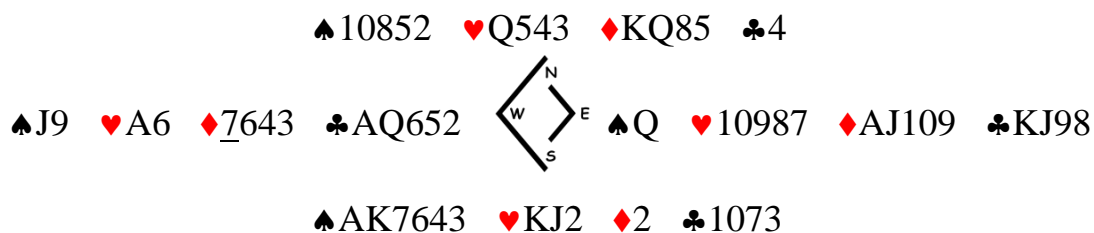
1 ♥ 3 ♦ can be a full splinter or a minisplinter, the next bid will clarify, then
1 ♥ 4 ♦ can be a full splinter with a void.

B.

1 ♥ 3 ♦ is just a minisplinter, then
1 ♥ 4 ♦ can be a full splinter with a singleton or void

Example 49.1: Slim Games can be Reached

E-W vul.



W	N	E	S
			1♠
P	3♣	P	4♠
all pass			

3♣ is a minisplinter showing 10 to 12 points with a stiff or void in clubs. South alerts the bid, and the opponents ask “Bergen?” South replies “No, club shortness and a four-card limit raise.” South has no wasted honours in clubs and can easily bid this slim game. The declarer, with three Aces to lose, makes +420.

Someone new to minisplinters only needs to be told the following, “Responding to minisplinters is easy.

With no wasted values, game is bid,

otherwise a partscore is played...

No calculation is needed.”

