



Ask Jerry

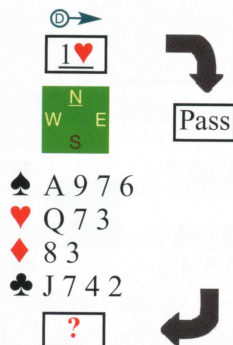
Well-known teacher and player **Jerry Helms** answers your bridge questions. Send your questions to askjerry@jerryhelms.com.

Dear Jerry: When partner opens 1♥ and I have four or more spades, should I show my spade suit even if I have a fit for hearts?

—B. U., Wilmington, VT

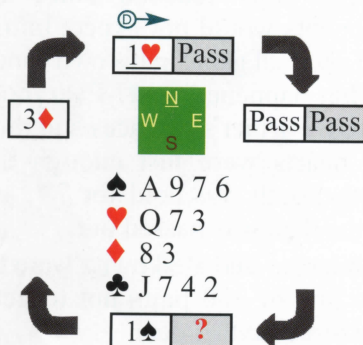
Dear B. U.: The general guideline in this situation is *support with support*. If you've already found a fit in one major, you rarely need to look for a 'better' fit in another major.

While it's true that a 4-4 fit will often be superior to a 5-3 fit, the rare times that it will be necessary are usually outweighed by the problems that may arise if you don't announce your fit right away. This is especially true when you have a single raise of partner's major. Consider this hand:



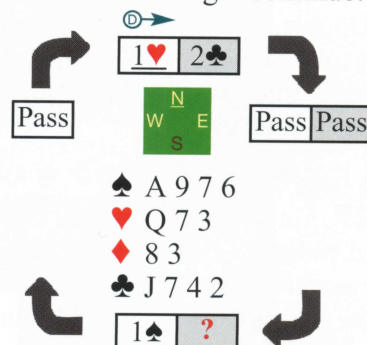
If you simply raise to 2♥, you have shown both the fit and the value of your hand all in one bid. Partner will be well-placed to know How High the partnership belongs.

If you were to respond 1♠, consider how awkwardly you would be placed if the auction continued like this:



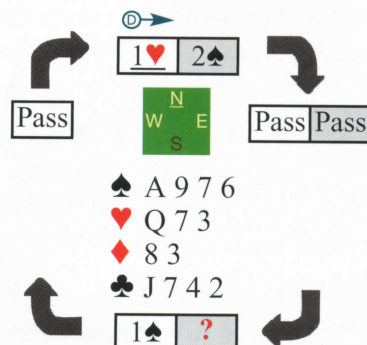
Now you are at the three level and still haven't shown your fit. With only 7 high-card points, you don't really have the strength to bid 3♥. So you either have to make a big overbid or let West buy the contract in 3♦.

Or the auction might continue:



When you now bid 2♥, it will sound like simple preference, not a raise. Partner will think you have at most two hearts, perhaps a singleton. If you had raised hearts right away, partner will know what you have.

How about this continuation:



You might now be in a 4-3 fit rather than your 5-3 fit. So forget about spades. Raise hearts! —JH♦

Take a cruise with Jerry to:
Bermuda and the Caribbean
on Royal Caribbean's beautiful
Explorer of the Seas
July 31 - August 9, 2014
For more information visit:
www.jerryhelms.com