

Ask Jerry

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Dear Jerry,

My partner and I have adopted 2/1 game force as our system of choice, with a limited number of conventions. We are using both Jacoby 2NT and splinter bids after major-suit openings, but sometimes we don't know which ones to use. I'm sure you have some advice.

Irene

Hi Irene.

Good question, and amazingly enough, I have a strong opinion, which I will be happy to share with you. Let's start with a pair of premises, which I think are extraordinarily important:

Any time you intend to reach the level of game, you should do so in the most descriptive fashion possible.

If your partner opens one of either major, and you hold four-card or longer support, with game-forcing values, there are only two options: Jacoby 2NT or splinter raise.

Simplistically, if your partner opened 1 , this hand would be perfect for a Jacoby 2NT conventional raise.

♠K743 ♥A4 ♦KQJ ♣8742 14 2NT

By agreement, the 2NT bid is defined as game forcing, four or more trumps, often with balanced distribution. The somewhat standard replies from opener:

 $3 - \sqrt{3}$ = shortness in the bid suit 3♠ = no shortness, more than minimum opening values

4♠ = no shortness, minimum opening values

3NT = Extras, with a wide variety of opinions as to exactly what it shows!

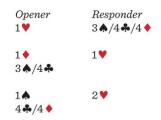
4 - 4 / 4 / 4 = a second five-card suit headed by two of the top three honors

Holding the previous hand, if opener replied 3 4 to your Jacoby 2NT initial response, your hand becomes very strong because you know that all of partner's high-card strength is working in conjuction with your high-card strength. Jacoby 2NT allows responder to gain more information about opener's values and distribution.

If partner opened 1 \(\bar{\lambda} \) and you held:

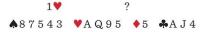
♠K743 VA642 ◆KJ85 ♣8.

you have a classic hand for making a 4 splinter raise, if available as an option. Devised by Dorothy Hayden (Truscott) in the late 1950s, she decreed that any unusual jump like this should show game-forcing values, at least four trumps, and either a singleton or a void in the bid suit. If your partner hears this, and holds nothing but small cards in the club suit, he knows all of his high-card strength is working in conjuction with your strength. Each of the following auctions would be examples of a splinter raise, and there are many others.



The general rule that I give to my students is that any unusual, unnecessary jump shift that sounds like it might be a splinter raise is a splinter raise!

So, back to your question: When should I choose a splinter raise and when should I use a Jacoby 2NT raise? My answer? You have to decide whether it is better to give or to receive! Examples:



Although your singleton diamond is important, for slam purposes, it would be great if partner were short in spades. For this reason, I would choose a Jacoby 2NT in an attempt to receive information.

Conversely, holding:

♠KQ743 ♥A952 ♦5 ♣K64

With strength in all of the outside suits, I would prefer to give partner information about my shape and values by making a splinter raise to 4.

To reiterate, a Jacoby 2NT should be selected with a desire to receive information. A splinter raise is often a better choice to give information.