



Ask Jerry

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Dear Jerry,

My regular duplicate partner and I are having a debate about whether we should play strong jump shifts or weak jump shifts. Could you provide some insights?

Andy

Hi Andy,

I applaud your decision to try and arrive at a consensus for your bidding methods. In most cases, the decisions about how to define your bids involve two factors: Frequency of occurrence and gain versus loss of one method over the other.

How about we start with the case for strong jump shifts? If you choose to play them, I strongly recommend the methods of the late, great, Paul Soloway, which are commonly referred to as Soloway Jump Shifts (SJS). A SJS announces game-forcing values with potential slam interest opposite a minimum opening bid. Three types of hands fit the model.

- 1) With a balanced hand of 18–19 points, responder jump shifts into his longest suit and typically follows by bidding notrump at the lowest available level. Over 1♣, holding:
 ♠AK4 ♥K53 ♦AKQ2 ♣532,
 jump shift to 2♦, then bid 2NT.
- 2) With 17-plus and a one-suited hand with a very strong suit, jump shift intending to rebid your suit over partner's response. Example: Over a 1♦ opening bid, holding:

♠AKJ1085 ♥K4 ♦K5 ♣K32,
 jump shift to 2♠, then rebid 3♠
 over partner's response.

- 3) With 17-plus and a good suit of your own and strong support for partner's suit, jump shift then rebid partner's suit at the lowest level. If partner opens 1♥, holding:

♠AK854 ♥AK4 ♦52 ♣K32,
 jump shift to 2♠, and follow by supporting opener's heart suit.

The central ingredient to the above agreement is that responder clarifies his sense of direction on his second bid. The SJS is either strong and balanced, strong and single-suited hand, or a hand with a good suit and strong support for opener's suit.

Soloway did not believe in jump shifting without a sense of direction. Therefore, over a minor-suit opening, if he held:

♠AKQ54 ♥AKQ43 ♦J5 ♣3,
 he recommended a 1♠ initial reply to preserve space while looking for the best fit.

Playing 2/1 game force, strong two-level jump shifts can be very valuable for slam exploration. Three-level jump shifts ... not so much, because a simple 2/1 establishes a game force and may prove to be more useful than the space-consuming jump shift.

Weak jump shifts (WJS)

If you choose to play weak jump shifts, I suggest that the bid shows a six-card or longer suit along with

values that would *not* justify a normal response. Over a minor-suit opening, consider the following:

① ♠A76432 ♥64 ♦Q4 ♣532

② ♠J109432 ♥743 ♦AJ5 ♣3

Each would be a normal 1♠ response, and would *not* qualify for a WJS.

③ ♠4 ♥QJ10762 ♦8764 ♣83

④ ♠Q1076432 ♥— ♦64 ♣8532

Both are classic WJS!

A WJS should deny any outside aces, and tends to deny any outside kings. The quality of your suit (or lack thereof) for a WJS depends on vulnerability and partnership style. For some, at favorable colors, after a 1♥ opening by partner, the following would qualify for 2♠:

♠976432 ♥4 ♦64 ♣8532.

Obviously, this would not be for the faint of heart!

WJS at the two level make a little more sense to me than WJS at the three level.

The SJS sometimes eases the exploration for good slam contracts, while the WJS is primarily intended to take up space from the opponents as they seek their best level and denomination. In addition, sometimes the WJS slows partner down when he holds a good hand, and you're able to keep the bidding low.

In terms of frequency of occurrence, I think it's a toss-up as to which type of