



# Adventures in Bridge

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## *This Week in Bridge*

### **(99) Delayed Splinters**

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Level: 3

Robert S. Todd

[robert@advinbridge.com](mailto:robert@advinbridge.com)

#### **General**

Splinters are some of the most valuable bids in bridge. They simultaneously set trump (usually agreeing to partner's suit) and further describe our distribution by showing our shortness (singleton or void.) Most players are familiar with traditional splinters -

#### *Example*

1♠ 4♦ 11-14 HCP, 4+♠, 0/1♦

But splinters can be used in many other situations to show a fit, show shortness, and enable better hand evaluation. These splinters allow partner to re-evaluate their hand for wasted values/fitting cards and better determine how many tricks our combined hands might take (if slam is possible on fewer than the normally required HCP.)

Many of these other splinters happen later in the auction than traditional ones and thus are frequently called *Delayed Splinters*. Let's look at some examples of delayed splinters.

#### **Delayed Splinters Opposite a 1NT Opener**

##### **Splinters After Stayman**

1NT 2♣

2♥ 3♠/4♣/4♦

These bids show 4+c♥, slam-interested values (usually about 13+ HCP), and shortness in the suit bid.

*Note: Many players play that 3♠ is an artificial, forcing ♥ raise as a slam try.*

1NT 2♣

2♠ 4♣/4♦/4♥

These bids show 4+c♠, slam-interested values (usually about 13+ HCP), and shortness in the suit bid.

### Splinters After Transfers

1NT 2♦\*

2♥ 3♠/4♣/4♦

These bids show 6+c♥, slam-interested values, and shortness in the suit bid.

1NT 2♥\*

2♠ 4♣/4♦/4♥

These bids show 6+c♠, slam-interested values, and shortness in the suit bid.

*Note: In both situations a simple jump shift (not a double jump shift) is a splinter because a shift would be natural and forcing while a weak jump shift would not apply.*

### Delayed Splinters in 2/1 Auctions

Responder's traditional splinters (in response to 1M openings) show 4-card support and a game forcing hand. When we have a similar hand with 3-card support opposite a 1-Major opening, we usually start with a 2/1 GF bid and then splinter on our next call -- this distinguishes 3-card from 4-card trump support.

#### Examples

1♠ 2♦

2♠ 4♣ 3-card ♠, 0/1♣, Slam Try, 12+ HCP

1♠ 2♦

2♥ 4♣ 4-card ♥, 0/1♣, Slam Try, 12+ HCP

In 2/1 GF auctions, the Opener can splinter in support of partner's suit if Responder bids their side suit and Opener has shortness. This does not promise extra values (just a hand that you would not be embarrassed to have opened.)

#### Example

1♠ 2♦

3♥ 4+c♦, S/V in ♥

This usually makes ♦ the trump suit, although since Responder could have 3-card support for ♠, then ♠ could still be a possible "better" fit (Majors are better than minors.)

*Note: 2♥ would show 4+♥ and be unlimited (since we are in a GF auction), thus we can use 3♥ (a simple jump shift, not a double jump shift) to show shortness.*



## Other Splinters

There are other auctions where showing shortness can be valuable in helping partner evaluate their hand for slam and properly describe your hand.

### *Example*

1♦ 1♠  
4♣/4♥

These bids show 4-card ♠ support with shortness in the suit bid and about 18+ points worth of playing strength – enough to force to game opposite a minimum response.

These splinters by the Opener allow Responder to evaluate their hand (controls, fitting cards, wasted values) to determine if slam has good play or not! Similarly, Responder can make a self-splinter in an effort to reach slam.

### *Example*

1♣ 1♠  
1NT 4♦

Since a 1NT rebid promises 2-3♣, then with a 6+♠ Responder has an implied fit. Thus, 4♦ shows a slam going hand with 0/1♦, setting ♠ as trump.

## Conclusion

Splinters are some of the best slam exploration tools in bridge – they are used to show a fit, display shortness, and express slam interest all in one bid. It is important that they communicate all this information since they eat up a tremendous amount of valuable bidding space. You will find that making a splinter simplifies the auction and leaves partner well-placed to judge the final contract. We should try to find and take advantage of as many of these valuable bids as you and your partner can agree upon!