

Jump Shifts by Responder and Advancer

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This article is a replacement section for *EZ Expert Bidding Tools, Second Edition*, pages 37-41, and supersedes parts of pages 49-50.

Jump shifts are played lots of ways, and we may decide to play different meanings in different situations. It's well to have a default meaning, which applies unless we have agreed on an exception.

This is a complicated topic. We'll talk in detail about *fit-showing*, *weak* (destructive or constructive), and *invitational* jump shifts. *Strong* and *artificial* jump shifts will be mentioned. The somewhat incompatible goals are:

- Have a narrowly-defined meaning.
- Let us get out below 2 NT, when it is invitational.
- Preserve bidding space that we need for exploration.
- Destroy bidding space that the opponents need.

Fit-Showing Jump (FSJ) – A Fine Default

The fit-showing jump can be played in many situations, after partner opens the bidding or overcalls. We have choices for when it applies:

- Never.
- As a default, in any or all of these situations:
 - Over partner's opening bid:
 - ☐ By a passed hand [standard].
 - ☐ By an unpassed hand.
 - ☐ When RHO overcalls.
 - ☐ When RHO doubles.*
 - Over partner's overcall.
 - ☐ By a passed hand.
 - ☐ By an unpassed hand.
 - ☐ When RHO bids.
 - ☐ When RHO doubles.*

* *Not a weak jump shift!*

For simplicity, while discussing the FSJ, we use the terms *opener* and *responder* to also include overcaller and advancer, respectively.

A FSJ response typically provides:

- a suit of at least five cards containing *secondary honors* (with or without the ace),
- support for opener's suit (3+ cards in a major, 4+ minor), and
- usually game-invitational values, but
- with silent opponents, possibly a slam try:
 - ❑ Only into a minor suit (lets opener pass two of a major).
 - Into any suit.

Exceptions: a jump shift into a suit shown by an opponent is a splinter, showing a singleton or void in the suit, with at least 4-card support. ♠⁶ Other, specific exceptions are likely.

If responder may have slam interest for the FSJ, it is forcing. Otherwise, the FSJ is strictly invitational and opener may pass.

❑ **FSNJ** (fit-showing non-jump).

We also play a fit-showing non-jump at the three level, when free-bid strength is logically impossible.

A fit for responder's suit makes game likely, while a misfit suggests staying low. (A-x-x-x-x is a terrible FSJ suit, because that ace is working in any contract.) Hand [A] is a FSJ to 2 ♠ over 1 ♦:

<i>Responder [A]</i>		
♠ K Q J 9 4		
♥ 9 8		
♦ K J 9 2		
♣ 7 2		
<i>Opener [1]</i>	<i>Opener [2]</i>	<i>Opener [3]</i>
♠ A 10 7	♠ A 7	♠ 10
♥ 10 6 4	♥ Q 10 4	♥ A J 10 3
♦ A Q 8 7 3	♦ A 8 7 3	♦ A Q 7 3
♣ K 6	♣ K 6 4 3	♣ K Q 10 9

With hand [1], opener jumps to 4 ♠. We have ten tricks, once we get in. We only go down when the ♣ A is behind the king and they take their four tricks immediately.

With hand [2], opener should choose to pass 2 ♠, when it is not forcing. Otherwise, bid 3 ♦. Opener will always have either three cards in the major or four in the minor – check it out! Hand [3] is a misfit, but has enough strength to bash out 3 NT.

Let's Talk about Clubs

Many writers gloss over the difficulties of responder's long club suit. Consider these hands for responder, after an opening 1 ♠ bid: ♦^{STAB}

- a. ♠ 9 ♥ A 7 3 ♦ K 10 3 ♣ A Q 10 8 3 2 (game force)
- b. ♠ 9 ♥ A 7 3 ♦ 10 5 3 ♣ A Q 10 8 3 2 (invitational)
- c. ♠ 9 ♥ Q 7 3 ♦ 10 5 3 ♣ K J 10 8 3 2 (weak)

2/1 responses. Only hand [a] is bid with the game-forcing 2 ♣ response. Without a special 3 ♣ jump shift to handle one of hands [b or c], we must respond 1 NT with both; what happens over that 1 NT response will include a major compromise.

Opener's Rebid over 1 NT

Opener's rebid in a new suit can be made with anything not strong enough for a jump shift or 2 NT rebid. Responder is under pressure to keep the bidding open, in case opener has extras. We'll talk more about this situation in the next chapter.

2 ♣ rebid. Here, even with six clubs, responder [c] should be pleased to pass opener's 2 ♣ rebid; with 8 HCP or more, raise to 3 ♣. Hand [b] is also a wide-range raise to 3 ♣.

Red suit rebid – the main problem. Responder [c] bids and should play 3 ♣ (or pass 2 ♥). With hand [b], the only rebid for responder that makes any sense is 2 NT (highlighted in the chart below). We would much prefer to play either 3 ♣, or 3 NT from *opener's* side.

2 ♠ rebid. Opener shows six spades. All bad hands, including [c], pass. Responder [b] gets to bid 3 ♣, which works fine.

Some writers do discuss responder's long club suit. Those who do, however, seldom get into specifics for responder's long diamond or heart suit – we'll talk about them soon. Here is the chart for responder's long clubs, having responded 1 NT with 6 to 12 points.

O2	R2	After { 1 ♠ – 1 NT [forcing] } – responder 6+ ♣
2 ♣		At least three clubs, often only five spades, 12-18 points.
	Pass	Play here (great for hand [c]).
	3 ♣	Natural; constructive or invitational (meh for [b]).
2 ♦		At least three diamonds, often only five spades, 12-18 pts.
	2 ♥	To play, usually at most one spade.
	2 ♠	To play, two spades, or three in a bad hand.
	2 NT	Ostensibly balanced, invites game (ugly for [b]).
	3 ♣	To play, at least six clubs.
	3 ♦	Natural raise; constructive or invitational.
	3 ♥	Invitational with at least six hearts.
	3 ♠	Invitational with three spades.
2 ♥		At least four hearts, often only five spades, 12-18 points.
	2 ♠ +	Similar to the above.
2 ♠		At least six spades, 12-15 points.
	Pass	All bad hands (including [c]).
	2 NT	Natural invitation.
	3 ♣	Natural invitation.

Weak Jump Shift (WJS)

Weak jump shifts, across the board, appear simple – one phrase with a new partner, and move on – but not so fast!

The natural, weak jump shift shows a suit of at least six cards and is *often played in competition*. It can be:

- *Destructive*: too few HCP for a one-level response, best played only at the two level; or
- *Constructive*: enough points for a one-level response, but less than invitational, perhaps suitable for the three level.

Opener should usually pass without a fit for responder's suit. The partnership can agree for opener, holding a strong hand, to bid over a two-level WJS as over partner's weak two-bid. Any exploration can be risky, and the jump has consumed space.

Rule: When a constructive weak jump shift is available, 1NT-forcing responder's non-jump bid of that suit is invitational.

This is not a particularly good plan, as the range of the jump shift itself is relatively wide, and the jump can mistime the auction. It addresses the “three hands, two bids” problem, just not that well.

Example 4 – Constructive Weak vs. Invitational

Opener

♠ A Q J 7 3 2

♥ K 9 2

♦ Q J 5

♣ 8

Responder

♠ 8

♥ Q 7 3

♦ 7 6 2

♣ K J 8 7 5 3

Auction 1 – JS constructive:

1 ♠

Pass [most hands]

3 ♣ [constructive weak JS]

Auction 2 – JS invitational:

1 ♠

2 ♠ [6+ card suit]

1 NT [force, plans 3 ♣ weak]

Pass [all bad hands pass]

2 ♠ is a trick lower than 3 ♣ and often scores. A 1 NT response lets opener show the extra length before the ratty clubs get at it!

5. ♠ 10 ♥ Q J 3 ♦ 7 6 2 ♣ A K J 8 5 3

On responder hand [5], we plan to try for game. It's useful for us to get our suit in *before* opener's rebid, with an invitational 3 ♣ bid. If opener had planned a jump rebid or jump shift, our bid will tell them where we live – with forcing rebids available.

Instead, playing constructive weak jump shifts, we would respond 1 NT on hand [5]; our 3 ♣ rebid would describe our hand – unless opener jumps and makes it impossible. 3 ♣ invitational is just right.

If the partnership is currently playing weak jump shifts, a superior plan is invitational jump shift responses to an opening bid, especially at 3 ♣.

If you do not choose fit-showing jumps as your default, you might set your default jump shift as weak. Good luck with that!

Beyond this point, this book mostly ignores weak jump shifts.

Invitational Jump Shift (IJS)

The natural invitational jump shift is a response to an opening bid when *the opponents are silent*, showing:

- a good suit of at least six cards,
- game-invitational values,
- no 4-card major.

Most 2/1 partnerships will be well-served by playing that all 3 ♣ responses to an opening bid of 1 ♦, 1 ♥, or 1 ♠ are natural invitations with a good suit. Because such hands are difficult to bid properly without this jump shift, and usually easy to bid with it, most examples in the literature are for clubs, such as:

6. ♠ A 7 ♥ 9 3 ♦ 10 5 3 ♣ A Q 10 8 3 2

Partner opens one of a suit, and we jump to 3 ♣ on hand [6]. Opener passes, bids a suit, or bids stopper, often reaching 3 NT. Any new suit is forcing. If opener repeats their first suit, that bid is: ♦⁸

□ forcing. ○ non-forcing, may raise. ○ to play.

Think of the IJS as a top-of-range weak two-bid with a good suit. Obviously, in a suit where we play weak two-bids, a passed responder should not hold such a hand. (Such a bid could revert to the default meaning, but it may be safer to just not use the bid.)

Occasionally, the invitational jump is the most descriptive bid on a mediocre suit – perhaps an opening hand downgraded for a misfit with opener. For example, my partner opened 1 ♥, and I chose the invitational 3 ♣ on hand [7]:

7. ♠ A K J 6 ♥ – ♦ 10 8 ♣ K 10 9 7 6 4 2

While a 1 ♠ response to a 1 ♥ opening may appear better, there is no way, after that start, to both invite game and, if refused, to play 3 ♣. “Move toward game or play in 3 ♣” is the meaning of this jump shift!

Three-Level Invitational Jump Shift

Three-level jump shifts are sometimes known as “jump shifts under,” being lower-ranking than opener’s suit. It’s easy to agree to play them all, but there are difficulties with 3 ♦ and 3 ♥.

Jump to 3 ♣. Both unbid suits are available at the three level to show a stopper for 3 NT. This is the essential invitational jump shift – it works well, and without it, we seldom have a good way to bid a hand such as [6] above.

Jump to 3 ♦ (over a major suit opening)

A natural invitation at 3 ♦ does not work well, because 3 ♣ is gone. Two suits are at issue, so by our rule, the other major over 3 ♦ *shows* a stopper in the suit. As with opener's "[Jump Rebid at 3 ♦]" on [page 165], we could play ambiguous major. We have these choices:

- 3 ♦ natural invitation.
 - By rule, two suits are in doubt, so bidding the other major shows a stopper there and highlights a problem in clubs.
 - We ignore clubs. One suit is in doubt, so bidding the other major *asks* for a stopper there.
- Tip:* Find out whether the opponents ignore clubs, and lead accordingly against 3 NT.
- *Ambiguous major.* Over 3 ♦, opener's repeat of their major is ambiguous, suggesting a club stopper. Opener's subsequent removal of 3 NT to either of our suits shows six cards in the major with no side stopper – non-forcing – a specific exception to our rule in "[Forcing to Game]" on page [56].
- ❑ 3 ♦ limit raise (modified Bergen, with the jump raise mixed).
- ❑ 3 ♦ fit-showing (with Swedish Jacoby 2 NT, jump raise mixed).
- 3 ♦ undefined.

When 1NT-responder has long diamonds, the "three hands, two bids" problem only arises when 1 ♠ opener rebids 2 ♥, the suit between opener's and responder's suits. When opener rebids 2 ♣, responder gets to bid either 2 ♦ on the weak hand or 3 ♦ on the invitational hand. Promising four cards, 2 ♥ is a less likely rebid than 2 ♣, which only promises three cards. We are covered, of course, when opener rebids 2 ♦ or 2 ♠ – or opens 1 ♥.

When responder has long diamonds, it's better to ignore the "three hands, two bids" problem:

- It only arises in diamonds, when the 1 ♠ opener rebids 2 ♥.
- While the IJS to 3 ♦ would address this relatively rare issue, it comes with significant problems of its own.
- The jump shift to 3 ♦ is more useful as a limit raise or an FSJ.

Jump to 3 ♥ (over 1 ♠).

Because there are no suits between hearts and spades, the “three hands, two bids” problem can never arise for hearts - we can play whatever we want at 3 ♥, without affecting that. (We always have both 2 ♥ and 3 ♥ available over opener’s minor suit rebid.) We want useful value from the jump to 3 ♥, consistent with other parts of the system and without introducing complexity. Your choice:

- ☐ 3 ♥ natural invitation, very good suit, little or no spade interest, insists that hearts be trump.

What we don’t want is some 6-bagger where we might need to explore for 3 NT. Responder needs a heart suit and hand such as [8] to respond the invitational 3 ♥, insisting that hearts be trump:

8. ♠ 6 ♥ K Q J 9 5 3 2 ♦ 8 3 ♣ K 7 5

- ☐ 3 ♥ fit-showing.
- ☐ 3 ♥ undefined.

Two-Level Invitational Jump Shifts

The natural, invitational jump shift can let us play a refused invitation at the two level. Partnerships may prefer other uses for these bids, such as fit showing, reverse Flannery, an artificial raise, or balanced invitation.

These two-level jump shifts are natural invitations:

- ☐ 2 ♦ ☐ 2 ♥ ☐ 2 ♠ ☐ 2 ♠ only over 1 ♥

Rule: When a two-level invitational jump shift was available in the suit of a one-level response, responder’s later jump in that suit is forcing.

People forget this rule, so the two-level IJS could be problematic. (When the two-level jump shift is not a long-suit invitation, we’ll see that responder’s three-level jump rebid in their suit could be either invitational or forcing – see “[New Minor Forcing (NMF)]” on page [108].)

We'll discuss "[Spades after a One Heart Opening]" on page [90]. This situation lacks the benefit of a 2/1 response in spades. Playing 2 ♠ as an IJS over hearts can help, letting us stop right there.

Consider these auctions, where responder is always showing a suit of at least six cards, playing an IJS at 2 ♥:

9. ♠ 8 6 3 ♥ A Q J 7 5 2 ♦ 7 6 ♣ K 9
1 ♦ – 2 ♥ [natural invitation]
10. ♠ K J 3 ♥ A Q J 7 5 2 ♦ A 6 ♣ K 9
1 ♦ – 1 ♥
1 NT – 3 ♥ [then 3 ♥ is forcing with a good suit]
11. 1 ♦ – 1 ♥
1 ♠ – 3 ♥ [3 ♥ is forcing with a good suit]
12. 1 ♦ – 1 ♥
1 NT – 2 ♣ [1-way new minor forcing]
2 ♦ – 3 ♥ [3 ♥ is forcing with a weaker suit]

On auctions [10 & 11], responder's 3 ♥ should be a slam try. Since opener is limited with at least two hearts, responder would bid 4 ♥ without slam interest. In auctions [10 & 11], 3 ♥ could be agreed to mean, "hearts are trump, start bidding controls." In auction [12], responder's 3 ♥ could be weaker, a choice of games.

Backstory

A great reference on the fit-showing jump and the fit-showing non-jump, is *Partnership Bidding at Bridge* by Robson & Segal.

In the 1930s, Josephine Culbertson called clubs "undignified." That's not a good reason to ignore them!

Robert Todd, in "(512) Jump Shifts after 1-Level Openings: Weak & Invitational," describes destructive jump shifts, as do Max Hardy, in his *Advanced* book, and Paul Thurston.

In a copy of Stewart Rubenstein's notes for playing with GLMs Adam and Zach Grossack, I found that they play invitational jump shifts over a major suit only at 3 ♣ clubs and at 2 ♠ over 1 ♥. Good ideas grow in multiple places.

Paul Thurston recommends the natural invitation at 3 ♥ over 1 ♠.

Gary Schwartz pointed out that playing a two-level jump shift response as invitational means that responder's jump rebid is forcing – and is often forgotten. In his area, GLM Disa Eythorsdottir, plays all jump shifts invitational with her clients. That is clearly superior to playing them all weak; however, as we have seen, there are details to discuss.

Board 12, from an online matchpoint pairs game, demonstrates how responder's invitational jump to 3 ♦ can be a problem.

Board 12		♠ 4 3	
East Deals		♥ 6 4 3	
N-S Vul		♦ A K Q 9 7 3	
		♣ 5 4	
♠ K 10 9 5	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center; width: 100px; height: 100px; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div>N</div> <div>W E</div> <div>S</div> </div>	♠ 8 7	
♥ K 9 7		♥ A Q 10 8 2	
♦ J 8 2		♦ 6 5	
♣ J 9 6		♣ 10 8 3 2	
		♠ A Q J 6 2	
		♥ J 5	
		♦ 10 4	
		♣ A K Q 7	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	1 ♠
Pass	3 ♦ ¹	Pass	?

¹ Good 6+ card suit, invitational.

Our agreement was that a bid of 3 ♥ would show a secure stopper, because two suits (hearts and clubs) are in doubt. Experts sometimes ignore clubs, so their bid of 3 ♥ would *ask* for a stopper; but we did not have that agreement. Either agreement is good when we get to bid 3 ♥, but not when we have to guess. Even if we guess right, we may go down – a second way to lose – so, passing is a better chance than guessing. Playing the ambiguous major, we bid 3 ♠, implying a club stopper and subside in 4 ♦.

Not playing the invitational jump, North would respond 1 NT, and we would rebid 2 ♣. North would choose the invitational 3 ♦. North could have bid 2 NT with a secure heart stop. We could pass, or bid 3 ♥, asking. (Since we have bid clubs on this auction, only the heart suit is in doubt.) Either way, we play a diamond partial, making four on decent defense.

However, if North responds 1 NT and opener rebids 2 ♥, North has the “three hands, two bids” problem. South has announced at least nine cards in the majors, so it's likely that either clubs are not stopped or that diamonds won't

run. A gentle false preference to 2 ♠ keeps the auction open, and may entice an opponent to step in – this looks better than 2 NT, with two small clubs.

♦ Alternative Methods

Old, standard American bidding. With hand [a or b], respond 2 ♣. With hand [c], we respond 1 NT and hope to show clubs next. Notice that “next” would almost always mean 3 ♣ – or declaring 1 NT! That’s one solution to the “three hands, two bids” problem. This is not an easy method, especially for slams.

Strong jump shifts. Soloway jump shifts are a popular method, for those who play strong jump shifts. The robots on BBO play this way. Karen Walker’s article is a good place to start reading about them. Marshall Miles has a section on them in his *Constructive* book, starting on page 74.

BWS. A jump shift to the three level is a natural invitation. 2 ♠ over 1 ♥ or 2 ♦ over 1 ♣ is strong (Soloway); otherwise, reverse Flannery.

Reverse Flannery (after our minor-suit opening): *A jump-shift to the two level is ... five-plus spades, four-plus hearts.* (2 ♠ is invitational; 2 ♥ is less than invitational.) Study is strongly advised before adopting this plan.

2 ♥ Balanced invitation. With this approach, a 2 NT response is natural and forcing, either small or large. 3 NT is balanced with medium strength. A jump to 2 ♥ is a balanced invitation without a 4-card major. Opener bids 2 NT or 3 NT to declare there; 2 ♠ is a puppet to 2 NT, for responder to declare there or in 3 NT. Sorry, I cannot find the source, or further details. Exposure to lead-directing doubles is an issue.

Other artificial jump shifts can be used as minor suit raises – see “[Options]” on page [139].

⁶⁻² **FSJ vs. Splinter.** Once an opponent names a suit, it’s less important to show shortness in an unbid suit. For example, we may play standard, natural game tries in these situations. In competition, pairs often play that responder’s jump shift into an unbid suit is a splinter. We don’t. The FSJ is our default, and we play it in unbid suits after an overcall, for example:

13. “It’s Your Call” (4), March 2023 *Bulletin*. In competition, we can get frisky with the FSJ:

♠ A 9 7 6 5 4 ♥ – ♦ Q J 8 5 4 ♣ 6 3

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♠	2 ♥	?

This hand is great for a 4 ♦ FSJ.

After the invitational jump shift, some partnerships play that opener's return to three of the original suit is non-forcing; it can either require responder to pass, or permit a raise. A Bridge Winners poll showed a clear majority for this bid to be forcing – and it's standard, without agreement to the contrary, that a bid over an invitation is forcing to game.

Lawrence, Mike; "An Important 2/1 Understanding," *Bridge Bulletin*, Nov 2025, p. 62.

Todd, Robert; "(512) Jump Shifts after 1-Level Openings: Weak & Invitational", [HTTPS://WWW.ADVINBRIDGE.COM/this-week-in-bridge/512](https://www.advinbridge.com/this-week-in-bridge/512), © AIB.

Walker, Karen; "Strong Jump Shifts by Responder (Soloway Style)," [HTTPS://KWBRIDGE.COM/js.htm](https://kwbridge.com/js.htm), ©.

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