

EXAMPLE of Bridge Lesson Handout

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Week 9

The best kept secret in competitive bidding: Fit-jumps

9.1 Delayed raises don't work in competition

In an uncontested auction, we have a large variety of ways to raise our partner: a direct raise to 2, 3, or 4; artificial raises like Bergen or splinters; bidding a new suit and then returning to opener's major; and, if you play 2/1, 1NT Forcing followed by returning to opener's major. Over a $1\heartsuit$ opening, for instance, you plan with $\spadesuit x \heartsuit Axx \diamondsuit AQTxx \clubsuit Qxxx$ is to respond $2\diamondsuit$ and support hearts at your second turn.

If goes $1\heartsuit-(1\spadesuit)$ to you, however, and you start with $2\diamondsuit$, the bidding might already be at $4\spadesuit$ before you can show your heart support. You could cuebid instead to show support immediately, but it's hard for partner to know how high to compete if you make the same call on $\spadesuit xxx \heartsuit Axxx \diamondsuit AKxx \clubsuit xx$ and $\spadesuit Ax \heartsuit Kxx \diamondsuit xx \clubsuit AQxxxx$.

Advancer has an even bigger problem: $(1\heartsuit)-1\spadesuit-(\text{Pass})-2\clubsuit$ is traditionally played as non-forcing, denying spade support; because overcaller may be as weak as a misfitting 8 HCP, overcaller rarely has the strength to demand a second bid. But advancer is always tempted to lie, when he picks up $\spadesuit xxx \heartsuit Axx \diamondsuit xx \clubsuit KQxxx$, and bid "2 \clubsuit on the way to 2 \spadesuit ," as well as not knowing how to bid "2 forcing clubs" when he picks up $\spadesuit xx \heartsuit Axx \diamondsuit AQx \clubsuit AKxxx$. Similarly, responder's new suits are traditionally not forcing over a double, or after a third or fourth hand opening, since responder is in principle limited to about 10 HCP and partner may have opened light. Hands like $\spadesuit Qxx \heartsuit AQxxx \diamondsuit Qxx \clubsuit xx$ cannot conveniently show a 3-card limit raise anymore, let alone show nice hearts *and* spade support.

In a competitive auction, our concern is to tell our partner, in one bid, how high we are willing to compete, with an emphasis on shape over strength. If you need two rounds of bidding to describe your hand, you are at a serious disadvantage. The solution is to send both messages with one bid: we define a *jump shift in a competitive auction* as showing—

- A fit for partner's suit
- Our own suit which can be established for extra tricks – typically HHxxx
- Offensive strength for at least the level to which we have jumped
- No specific promise about defensive strength.

Recall that the total trick count is affected both by extra trumps, and by side suits that can be established only if your side declares. A double fit for each side can easily produce 19 or 20 total tricks with 17 total trumps. For all the same reasons that we want to tell our partner how many trumps we have, we also want to tell him if we have a useful side suit.

There is a whole book about the applications of fit-jumps, Andrew Robson and Oliver Segal's *Partnership Bidding at Bridge: the Contested Auction*, out of print but now available with the authors' permission as a free ebook download¹.

9.2 Fit-showing jumps complement the cuebid raise

After 1♥-(1♠), we jump to 3♣ with ♠xxx ♥Qxxx ♦x ♣AQxxx to show a hand willing to go to at least 3♥, with a club suit. If fourth hand bids 4♠, now it will be easy for opener to bid 5♥ with ♠x ♥AKxxx ♦Axxx ♣Kxx but seek a penalty with ♠Ax ♥AKxxx ♦Kxxx ♣xx, knowing partner's hand will fit poorly.

The cuebid still shows a limit raise or better, but this now tends to be a semibalanced hand² like ♠xx ♥KQxx ♦Axxx ♣Qxx. If you have a second suit at all when you cuebid, it will be a suit like A5432, unlikely to be worth more than face value.

Robson and Segal recommend using both single and double jumps as fit-showing. After 1♠-(2♣) they give ♠K642 ♥J7 ♦KQT96 ♣75 as an example of a 3♦ bid, and both ♠KJ64 ♥7 ♦AQT964 ♣7 and ♠QT642 ♥75 ♦KQT96 ♣7 as 4♦ bids. They keep only the jump in overcaller's suit as a splinter.

Opener	Responder
♠KQT964	♠A75
♥AQT7	♥9
♦AQT	♦KJ9843
♣—	♣T43

These bids can be used both obstructively and constructively. At left is a hand from the Butte sectional this past June. What does responder do after a 1♠ opening and 2♣ overcall? If you bid 2♠ because you have 8 HCP and 3 spades, partner will downgrade his hand, expecting red losers, and stop in 4♠, making 7. With an 8-loser hand, 2♠ is an underbid. If you can jump to 3♦, showing a

hand willing to risk the 3-level in spades plus a good diamond suit, opener will have no trouble visualizing slam.

Jumps by advancer: the same methods apply after (1♥)-1♠-(Pass): 2♣ and 2♦ are natural and nonforcing, as in standard, denying 3 spades; 3♣ and 3♦ promise a good minor suit and trump support; 2♥ is an all-purpose strong bid³, either a shapeless limit raise or a game force with or without support – but a game force without support is going to be quite rare – while 2♠ and 3♠ are weak raises and 3♥ is a constructive shapeless 4-card raise.

By a passed hand: The considerations here are somewhat different. Responder is now limited to a maximum of 10 or 11 HCP, so will never have a hand worth a jump to the 3-level opposite a possibly-subminimum opening unless he has a fit. If you don't play Drury, a normal 2♣ response to 1♥ is something like ♠Kxx ♥xx ♦xxx ♣KQJxx, while with ♠xx ♥Kxx ♦xxx ♣KQJxx you really are a bit too good for a simple 2♥ response but can't start with 2♣ for fear of being passed.

¹<http://www.bridgewithdan.com/systems/PartnershipBiddingAtBridge.ZIP>

²Robson and Segal use 2♠ to show a shapeless 3-card limit raise and 2NT a shapeless 4-card limit raise.

³here again, R&S use 2♥ with at most 3 trump and 2NT with 4 trump, limit or better

If you *do* play Drury, what will you use a jump to 3♣ for? If your hand was worth a 3♣ opening you would have already done that on the first round. It is true that Drury lets you stop low when you have a fit – but it is the hands that have a fit that can best survive the 3-level, not the misfits.

9.3 Things to discuss before agreeing to play fit-jumps

When do they apply? Almost all experts use them by advancer, and by responder after an overcall. Not everyone uses them over a double (some keep Bergen on for instance), and rather few people still use them when third hand opens and fourth hand passes – ironic since that was the one situation where they were actually taught in beginner’s textbooks 50 years ago.

Suit quality: To be worth showing, the side suit needs to be good enough to be a second source of tricks. Some people specifically require exactly two of the top three honors; other allow KJxxxx and similar holdings that play well if partner has Hx or Hxx. AKQxx is not ideal as a fit-jump; since partner has nothing in your side suit he will assume the hand is a misfit.

How many trumps? In a perfect world we would always have 4-card support for a 3-level fit jump, and some people insist on it – but I find this overloads the 3-card limit raise, so I am willing to jump to the 3-level with 3 good trumps and a good side suit, especially as a passed hand.

Are fit-jumps forcing? Usually, yes – but some people make an exception for a jump out of a minor into a major. (Say ♠AQxxx ♥xx ♦Kxxx ♣xx after a 3rd hand 1♦ opening.)

What jumps, if any, are still splinters? Robson and Segal play only a jump cuebid in the opponent’s suit as a splinter, and use fit-jumps in all 3 suits, 3♣ through 4♥, after 1♠-X. My preference is to use only single jumps as fit, after a double or as a passed hand, with the remaining double jumps still splinters.

Fit non-jumps: some people also use 3 of a new suit as fit-showing even if it is not a jump, (1♥)-1♠-(2♥)-3m. Do not assume these are fit-showing without prior discussion. Similarly, Pass-(Pass)-1♠-(2♥)-3♣ might logically be fit-showing if its natural meaning doesn’t make sense.

9.4 Examples

On Deal 1, South is going to give up with his flat 13 if it goes 1♠-3♣-4♣-5♣. North’s fit-jump, however, enables him to name the 11 tricks he plans to win: 5 spades, the ♥A, and 5 diamonds. (E-W shouldn’t sacrifice in 6♣: it may cost too much; on a good day 5♠ may be failing; and on a bad day clubs may be 3-1 and you might push N-S into a making 6♠.)

On Deal 2, East has a hand which is uncomfortably maximum for a 2♠ raise; if 3♣ comes back around you will not be happy selling out. Your diamond suit is a potential source of extra tricks, and a 3♦ fit-jump is a much mores descriptive bid than a generic spade raise. Sure enough, there are 19 tricks with 17 trumps. The game is only biddable when West knows about the double fit. If it goes 1♣-1♠-2♣-2♠-cl3, West’s 3♠ is merely competitive.

Deal 1 Confidently bid 5 over 5

None vul	♠Kxxx ♥xx ♦AQJxx ♣xx	♠Jx ♥KJxx ♦Txxx ♣Axx	West North East South 3♣ 4♦(1) 5♣ 1♠ Pass Pass Pass 5♠	♣K led									
♠xx ♥Qxx ♦x ♣KQJxxxx	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠AQxxx ♥Axx ♦Kxx ♣xx	(1) ♠ support, game values, ♦HHxxx+	
	N												
W		E											
	S												

Deal 2 Confidently bid a 22-HCP game

♠AKxxx ♥Axxx ♦Qxx ♣x	♠Tx ♥Kxx ♦Jxxx ♣Qxx2	♠Qxx ♥xx ♦AKTxx ♣xxx	West North East South 1♠ 2♣ 3♦(1) 1♣ 4♠ Pass Pass Pass	♣2 led									
	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠Jxx ♥QJxx ♦x ♣AKJxx	(1) 8 losers, 3+♠, ♦HHxxx+	
	N												
W		E											
	S												

On Deal 3, East does his job and bounces the bidding to 4♠ to give N-S a difficult decision. A pair that does not employ fit-jumps will start 1♥-2♠-3♠-4♠; South will pass (forcing), and North will feel his cards are better playing hearts than defending spades – and 5♥ will go down on best defense (trump leads.) If North has shown his full hand on the first round with a 4♣ fit jump, South will realize the N-S hands fit badly, and, even without a sure trump trick, he doubles, to warn North against bidding on. He will be confident of the right defense, too: overtake the heart and switch to his singleton club.

Would you consider jumping to 3♠ instead of just 2♠ with West's hand? Overbidding by 4 tricks at favorable vulnerability (counting 4½ for spades and ½ for the ♦K) is reasonable, and gives N-S a much more difficult bidding decision.

The auction starts the same way on Deal 4 as it did on Deal 3. But the second round of the auction is very different: this time, South learns his side has a big double fit, and he will surely refuse to sell out to 4♠. His best action is a 5♦ cuebid, rather than a simple 5♥ bid, to alert partner to the possibility of a slam. There is no room for a scientific slam exploration, but North may well deduce that slam is a good bet. (E-W have a paying sacrifice – 6♠ goes

Deal 3 Timely warning of a misfit

NS vul ♠AQxxxx ♥xxx ♦Kx ♣xx	♠x ♥KQxx ♦xxx ♣AQJxx <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; margin: 5px;"> N W E S </div> ♠Jxx ♥AJxxx ♦AQTx ♣x	♠KTx ♥x ♦Jxxx ♣KT9xx	West North East South 2♠ 4♣(1) 4♠ 1♥ Pass Pass Pass Double (1) Fit-jump	♥K led
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Deal 4 An aggressive but logical slam

♠AQxxxx ♥5 ♦Kxx ♣xxx	♠xxx ♥KQxx ♦x ♣AQxxx <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; margin: 5px;"> N W E S </div> ♠x ♥AJxxx ♦Axxx ♣Kxx	♠KJx ♥xxx ♦QJxxx ♣xx	West North East South 2♠ 4♣(1) 4♠ 1♥ Pass 6♥ Pass 5♦ Pass (1) Fit-jump	♥5 led
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for only 1400 even if N-S get their diamond ruffs – but East may not be confident enough that 6♥ will make to bid it.)

Playing fit-jumps you give up the precision strength-showing of Bergen raises, in favor of focusing on distribution. The immediate raise to 3♠ is weakish, and tends to be a flat hand if it has any significant high cards (♠AQxxx ♥xx ♦KQxxx ♣xx might fit-jump rather than preempting 3♠.) On Deal 5, East would have an easy 3♥ call over a 3♣ Bergen Raise, but is shut out over a preemptive jump. E-W might sell out to 3♠, or might miss their 4-4 heart fit if West expects 2-3-4-4 or 1-3-5-4 shape for East's responsive double. West overcalling 2♣ rather than starting with a double will also kill E-W's chance of finding 4♥.

(Even as the cards lie, 4♠ is a profitable sacrifice over 4♥, though N-S won't find it, not knowing about the KJxx-Qxx diamond combination. Note that if North had had 5 diamonds and been able to fit-jump, then South might find a 4♠ bid.)

On Deal 6, the posted auction would have been a fairly standard auction before the Drury convention became popular. Most modern 2/1 players, with a slightly irrational fear of getting to the 3-level opposite a subminimum 1♠ opening, would have a different auction:

Deal 5 Obstruction with a weak hand

	♠QTx2 ♥xx ♦KJxx ♣xxx						
♠x ♥KQxx ♦Axx ♣AJxxx	N W E S	♠Kxx ♥JTxx ♦xxx ♣KQx	West	North	East	South	
	♠AJxxx ♥Axx ♦Qxx ♣xx		Double 4♣?	3♠ Pass	Double? Pass	1♠ Pass Pass	♠2 led

Deal 6 The limitations of Drury

	♠AJx ♥x ♦KQTxx ♣xxxx						
♠xxx ♥AJTx ♦xxx ♣AJx	N W E S	♠xx ♥KQxxx ♦xx ♣KQxx	West	North	East	South	
	♠KQxxx ♥Qxx ♦Axx ♣xx		Pass Pass Pass	3♦(1) 4♠	Pass Pass	1♠ 3♥(2) Pass	xxx led

(1) Fit jump
(2) Generic game invitation

Pass-Pass-1♠-Pass; 2♣(Limit raise of spades)-2♥-2♠(minimum)-3♥. Will North be brave enough to gamble on 4♠? It's a much easier game to find if North describes his hand and South can upgrade a bit on seeing the double fit.

Many good players do use Drury – but a) be aware that it makes it easy for the opponents to come in cheaply at the 2-level, and b) ask yourself, with what hand would you ever jump to 3♦ here, if you couldn't open 2♦ or 3♦ and you don't have a spade fit?