Major Suit Responses to 1 of a Minor

by

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Reference

The Convention

| 1♣ | 1♠ |     | 1♦ | 1♥ | 1♣ | 1♥ | 1♠ | 2♥ |
| 2♠ | 2N |     | 2♠ | 2N | 2♠ | 2N | 2♠ | 2N |

In each sequence, a minor-suite opening is followed by opener’s single raise of responder’s 1 of a major. A common agreement is that responder’s 2N promises at least a game-invitation, and asks opener to clarify the number of trumps held, and strength.

By imposing modest agreements on the requirements for opener’s 2♠/2♥ raise, it is possible to define a simple response structure that allows opener to clarify distribution as well.

In order to maximize the available space, responder’s asking bid is re-defined as the next available bid. This is consistent with the Useful Space Principle [1]. Thus:

| 1♣ | 1♠ |     | 1♦ | 1♥ | 1♣ | 1♥ | 1♠ | 2♥ |
| 2♠ | 2N |     | 2♠ | 2N | 2♠ | 2N | 2♠ | 2N |

Prerequisites

Opener’s raise of responder’s major normally promises at least 4 trumps. The decision to raise with only 3 trumps may be taken as the “lesser of evils”. Opener will have a holding unsuitable for a non-jump re-bid or a bid in a new suit or no-trump; opener will also be too weak for a strength-showing reverse or jump rebid. There are three relevant distributions:

1) 5-3-3-2 with 5 in opener’s minor, 3 in responder’s major and a “worthless” doubleton (J x or worse); with honor-doubleton, opener should prefer to rebid in No-trump.

2) 5-4-3-1 with 5 in opener’s minor, 3 in responder’s major and a 4-card suit that either is too weak to bid naturally, or that cannot be shown because opener’s hand does not qualify for a reverse.

3) 4-4-3-2 with 4 in opener’s minor, 3 in responder’s major, 4 in a lower suit, and a “worthless” doubleton.

In this treatment, the reservation about the worthless doubleton in case 3) is ignored. Opener should bid 1N. When responder has at least an invitational hand, a check-back sequence will uncover a 4-4 fit in the other major, or the 4-3 fit in responder’s initially bid major.

When a 3-card raise is made only with one of the distributions in 1) or 2) above, opener’s third bid will uncover his exact distribution.

1) Opener’s strength will be less than the minimum for a 1N opening, typically 11 – 14 hcp.

2) Opener’s strength will be less than that required for a reverse into the 4-card suit: 11 – 16 hcp. Responder will assume the lower range 11 – 13; then, with 14 – 16 opposite a game try, opener will accept the game-try by making another bid.
The Agreement

- Opener will make a 3-card raise of responder’s major only with one of the holdings described above:
  1) 5-3-3-2, 11 – 14 hcp
  2) 5-4-3-1, 11 – 16 hcp

- Following the 2N or 2♠ ask, an opener with only 3-card support must re-bid below 3 of responder’s major:
  1) With 5-3-3-2, opener re-bids the 5-card minor
  2) With 5-4-3-1, opener bids the 4-card suit (following a 2♠ ask, 2N will be a surrogate bid for ♠)

- Following the 2N or 2♠ ask, an opener with 4-card support must re-bid at or above 3 of responder’s major:
  ✓ Bid 3 of responder’s major with a minimum, no shortness
  ✓ Bid 3N with a non-minimum, no shortness, and stoppers in both un-bid suits
  ✓ Re-bid 4 of opener’s minor with a 6-card suit
  ✓ Splinter in the one of the two un-bid suits with 4-4-4-1
  ✓ Bid 4 of responder’s major with either 5-card support or with a non-minimum, no shortness, unsuitable for 3N.

Suit-specific definitions

- Following a 1♣ opening bid and a raise of responder’s 1♠ to 2♠:

  1♠ 1♠
  2♠ 2N

  3♠ 3-3-2-5 or 3-2-3-5, 11 – 13 hcp
  3♦ 3-1-4-5, 11 – 16 hcp
  3♥ 3-4-1-5, 11 – 16 hcp
  3♣ 4 ♣’s, any minimum 11 – 13 hcp with no singleton
  3N 4 ♣’s, non-minimum, stoppers in ♥ and ♦
  4♠ 4 ♣’s, 6 ♣’s
  4♦ splinter, usually 4-4-1-4
  4♥ splinter, usually 4-1-4-4
  4♣ 5 ♣’s, or 4 ♣’s non-minimum, unsuited to 3N

- Following a 1♦ opening bid and a raise of responder’s 1♠ to 2♠:

  1♠ 1♠
  2♠ 2N

  3♠ 3-1-5-4, 11 – 16 hcp
  3♥ 3-3-5-2 or 3-2-5-3, 11 – 13 hcp
  3♣ 3-4-5-1, 11 – 16 hcp
  3♣ 4 ♣’s, any minimum 11 – 13 hcp with no singleton
  3N 4 ♣’s, non-minimum, stoppers in ♥ and ♦
  4♠ splinter, usually 4-4-4-1
  4♦ 4 ♣’s, 6 ♣’s
  4♥ splinter, usually 4-1-4-4
  4♣ 5 ♣’s, or 4 ♣’s non-minimum, unsuited to 3N
Following a 1♣ opening bid and a raise of responder’s 1♥ to 2♥:

1♣  1♥
2♥  2♣
2N  4-3-1-5, 11 - 16 hcp, presumably very weak ♥’s
3♠  3-3-2-5 or 3-2-3-5, 11 - 13 hcp
3♥  1-3-4-5, 11 - 16 hcp
3♥  4 ♥’s, any minimum 11 - 13 hcp with no singleton
3♠  splinter, usually 1-4-4-4
3N  4 ♥’s, non-minimum, stoppers in ♣ and ♠
4♦  4 ♥’s, 6 ♠’s
4♥  splinter, usually 4-4-1-4
5♥  5 ♥’s, or 4 ♥’s non-minimum, unsuited to 3N

Following a 1♦ opening bid and a raise of responder’s 1♥ to 2♥:

1♠  1♥
2♥  2♣
2N  4-3-5-1, 11 - 16 hcp, presumably very weak ♥’s
3♠  1-3-5-4, 11 - 16 hcp, presumably weak ♥’s
3♥  3-3-5-2 or 3-2-5-3, 11 - 13 hcp
3♥  4 ♥’s, any minimum 11 - 13 hcp with no singleton
3♠  splinter, usually 1-4-4-4
N   4 ♥’s, non-minimum, stoppers in ♣ and ♠
4♣  splinter, usually 4-4-4-1
4♥  4 ♥’s, 6 ♠’s
4♥  5 ♥’s, or 4 ♥’s non-minimum, unsuited to 3N