

Symmetric Majors

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Useful Space Principle (USP)

Available bidding space should be assigned by a system to those devices that can best use it.
Due to *Jeff Rubens* in *The Bridge World Vol. 52 No. 2, November 1980*.

USP Corollary:

Bidding conventions should be defined by steps rather than by name. In a bidding convention designed to be used for both major suits, the conventional bids for *Hearts* must be 1 step below the equivalent conventional bids for *Spades*. For example,

Kickback

Spades 4N Keycard-ask; 5♣ = 0 or 3, 5♦ = 1 or 4, 5♥ = 2 or 5 not Q♠, 5♠: 2 or 5 and Q♠
Hearts 4♠ Keycard-ask; 4N = 0 or 3, 5♣ = 1 or 4, 5♦ = 2 or 5 not Q♥, 5♥: 2 or 5 and Q♥

Reverse Bergen Raises

Spades 2N (game-forcing), 3♣ (invitational), 3♦ (constructive)
Hearts 2♠ (game-forcing), 2N (invitational), 3♣ (constructive)

Major-Suit Symmetry

Applying the USP corollary guarantees Major-Suit *symmetry*: **following any natural bid of either Heart or Spades, an identical set of feasible continuations is available in either major suit.**

For example, after a 3♣ Bergen raise of 1♠, two feasible *trial bids* are available, viz. 3♦ and 3♥. The corresponding *symmetric* Bergen raise of 1♥ is 2N, one step below 3♣, and again there are two feasible trial bids available, 3♣ and 3♦.

This strategy is applied to obtain symmetry of several commonly used major suit conventions (listed above), making the conventions equally useful for *Hearts* as for *Spades*.

Symmetric Bergen-Style Raises

1♠	2N	1♥	2♣	(Semi-)Balanced game-forcing raise	12+ high-card points
	3♣		2N	Invitational (Limit) raise	10 – 12 support points
	3♦		3♣	Constructive raise	7 – 10 support points
	3♥		3♦	Anonymous Splinter raise	12+ support points
	3♠		3♥	Preemptive raise	0 – 7 support points

Table 1: Symmetric Reverse Bergen Raises with Anonymous Splinters

The Anonymous Splinter Raise

1♠	3♥	1♥	3♦	Anonymous Splinter
3♠		3♥		Splinter Relay (1 st step): forces unmasking of the splinter
3N		3♠		Sign-off Relay (2 nd step): suggests signing off in game
4♠		4♥		Direct Sign-off

Table 2: Continuations after an Anonymous Splinter

When identifying the suit of a splinter, this treatment adopts the Over-Shorts strategy:

A splinter suit is identified by bidding the next higher suit; ♦ to identify a ♣-splinter, ♥ to identify a ♦-splinter, ♠ to identify a ♥-splinter, ♣ to identify a ♠-splinter.

1♠	3♥	<u>Anonymous Splinter</u>	1♥	3♦	<u>Anonymous Splinter</u>
3♠	3N	Some singleton	3♥	3♠	Some singleton
	4♣	<i>unassigned</i>		3N	<i>unassigned</i>
	4♦	♣-void		4♣	♠-void
	4♥	♦-void		4♦	♣-void
	4♠	♥-void		4♥	♦-void
1♠	3♥		1♥	3♦	
3♠	3N	<u>Singleton Relay</u>	3♥	3♠	<u>Singleton Relay</u>
4♣	4♦	♣-singleton	3N	4♣	♠-singleton
	4♥	♦-singleton		4♦	♣-singleton
	4♠	♥-singleton		4♥	♦-singleton

Table 2a: Unmasking the Splinter (Over-Shorts)

1♠	3♥		1♥	3♦	
3N	4♣	Accepting , opener bids 4♠	3♠	3N	Accepting , opener bids 4♥
	4♦	♣-splinter, slam try		4♣	♠-splinter, slam try
	4♥	♦-splinter, slam try		4♦	♣-splinter, slam try
	4♠	♥-splinter, slam try		4♥	♦-splinter, slam try

Table 2b: Sign-off Relay

The Constructive Raise

1♠	3♦		1♥	3♣	
3♥		Unspecified Game-Try	3♦		Unspecified Game-Try
3/4♠		Sign-off	3/4♥		Sign-off
1♠	3♦	<u>Unspecified Game-Try</u>	1♥	3♣	<u>Unspecified Game-Try</u>
3♥	3♠	Minimum	3♦	3♥	Minimum
	3N	Maximum, unbalanced		3♠	Maximum, unbalanced
	4X	Maximum, (semi-)balanced		3N=♠	Maximum, (semi-)balanced
				4X	Maximum, (semi-)balanced

Table 3: Constructive Raise Continuations

The Unspecified Game-Try may conceal a delayed slam try.

- Following an unbalanced maximum response, the next available bid is a *relay*; responder shows the splinter-suit, over-shorts style.
- A (semi-)balanced maximum is shown by cue-bidding a cheapest 1st or 2nd round control.

The Invitational (Limit) Raise

1♠	3♣		1♥	2N	
3♦		Mathe Ask, Slam-try	3♣		Mathe Ask, Slam-try
3♥		Unspecified Game-Try	3♦		Unspecified Game-Try
3/4♠		Sign-off	3/4♥		Sign-off
1♣	3♣	<u>Mathe Ask: Slam-Try</u>	1♥	2N	<u>Mathe Ask: Slam-Try</u>
3♦	3♥	Splinter-based Limit Raise	3♣	3♦	Splinter-based Limit Raise
	3♠	(Semi-)Balanced Limit Raise		3♥	(Semi-)Balanced Limit Raise
1♠	3♣	<u>Unspecified Game-Try</u>	1♥	3♣	<u>Unspecified Game-Try</u>
3♥	3♠	Minimum	3♦	3♥	Minimum
	3N	Maximum, unbalanced		3♠	Maximum, unbalanced
	4♠	Maximum, (semi-)balanced		4♥	Maximum, (semi-)balanced

Table 4: Invitational (Limit) Raise Continuations

The Mathe Ask is a slam try. Opener discovers whether responder's invitation includes some shortness (singleton or void), or is based primarily on high-card points.

- When responder's hand type is unsuitable, opener may sign off directly at 4 of the agreed major suit.
- When responder shows a splinter-based raise, the anonymous splinter structure described earlier may be deployed to discover the type and suit of the splinter.
- When responder shows a (semi-)balanced raise, opener may relay to initiate below-game cue-bidding.

The Unspecified Game-Try structure is identical to that for the Constructive Raise.

The (Semi-)Balanced Game-Forcing Raise

1♠	2N	1♥	2♠
3♣	♣-splinter	2N	♠-splinter (NT = ♠ surrogate)
3♦	♦-splinter	3♣	♣-splinter
3♥	♥-splinter	3♦	♦-splinter
3♠	Extra values, no shortness	3♥	Extra values, no shortness
3N	Balanced maximum	3♠	<i>Partnership agreement</i>
4♣	Good 5-card ♣ suit	3N	Balanced maximum
4♦	Good 5-card ♦ suit	4♣	Good 5-card ♣ suit
4♥	Good 5-card ♥ suit	4♦	Good 5-card ♦ suit
4♠	Any minimum	4♥	Any minimum

Table 5a: Traditional Balanced Game-Forcing Raise Continuations

1♠	2N	1♥	2♠
3♣	Shape Ask	2N	Shape Ask
3♦	2-1 Control Ask	3♣	2-1 Control Ask
3♥	Anonymous Self-Splinter	3♦	Anonymous Self-Splinter
3♠	Trump Ask	3♥	Trump Ask
3N	Mini-Kickback <i>or</i> Demand-Cue	3♠	Mini-Kickback <i>or</i> Demand-Cue
4♣	<i>Partnership Agreement</i>	3N	<i>Partnership Agreement</i>
4♦	<i>Partnership Agreement</i>	4♣	<i>Partnership Agreement</i>
4♥	<i>Partnership Agreement</i>	4♦	<i>Partnership Agreement</i>
4♠	Minimum Sign-off	4♥	Minimum Sign-off

Table 5b: Balanced Game-Forcing Raise Continuations with Asking Bids

The Shape Ask is a serious slam try aimed at counting the combined distributions, and perhaps discovering a playable secondary 4-4 or 5-5 fit. When the primary major suit fit is 5-4, playing in the secondary fit may provide an additional trick via a discard in the primary suit.

The 2-1 Control Ask is an attempt to evaluate hard controls (Ace = 2, King = 1) below the game level, and is a precursor to a slam try. Responses are in steps showing 0/1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 6, 7 (4M).

The Anonymous Self-Splinter surrenders control to responder. The continuations available to responder are exactly those described earlier for the Anonymous Splinter raise.

The Trump Ask is appropriate as a precursor to a strong slam try when opener's trump holding is porous. A variety of response structures is available to disclose responder's trump honors.

Mini-Kickback provides a below-game Keycard-ask, potentially followed by a 5-level Epsilon ask (suit-specific control ask). It is appropriate when opener has an unprotected or porous side suit. (Filler) Epsilon steps- 1st none or AK, 2nd Q, 3rd K, 4th KQ, 5th A, 6th AQ, 7th AKQ.

Modified C/1MX

1♠	(x)	xx	→ 2♣	1♥	(x)	xx	→ 2♠
		1N	(Semi-)Forcing			1♠	→ 2♣
		2♣	→ 2♦			1N	(Semi-)Forcing
		2♦	→ 2♥			2♣	→ 2♦
		2♥	→ 2♠, 3, Constructive+			2♦	→ 2♥, 3, Constructive+
		2♠	3, Preemptive Raise			2♥	3, Preemptive Raise
		2N	4+, Invitational+			2♠	4+, Invitational+
		3♣	4+, Mixed, shortness			2N	4+, Mixed, shortness
		3♦	4+, Mixed, balanced			3♣	4+, Mixed, balanced
		3♥	4+, Anonym. Splinter			3♦	4+, Anonym. Splinter
		3♠	4+, Preemptive			3♥	4+, Preemptive

Table 6: Symmetric Modified C/1MX

Direct Raises (2M, 3M) are preemptive.

(Semi-)Forcing 1N, partnership agreement.

A New Suit Transfer is unlimited. Opener should always accept the transfer except with no support **and either** a self-sufficient suit *or* a good second suit. Following acceptance,

- **pass** with a long suit, no support for opener's major, and less than a constructive hand,
- bid 2 of opener's major with constructive 2-card support and values in the shown suit,
- bid 2N with invitational 2-card support and values in the shown suit,
- self-raise or bid a new suit with invitational values and no support for opener's major,
- make any other bid with game values.

The (1-under) Transfer into opener's Major is a 3-card raise, at least constructive. Then,

- **pass** opener's 2M with a constructive raise only,
- re-raise (3M), bid 2N or a new suit below 3M to show an invitational raise,
- bid above 3M with game values.

4-Card Raises described above.

3-Way Game-Tries

Following a simple major suit raise, 1M – 2M:

1♠	2♠		1♥	2♥	
2N		Reverse Help-Suit Game Try	2♠		Reverse Help-Suit Game Try*
3♣		♣-Short-Suit Game Try	2N=♠		♠-Short-Suit Game Try**
3♦		♦-Short-Suit Game Try	3♣		♣-Short-Suit Game Try
3♥		♥-Short-Suit Game Try	3♦		♦-Short-Suit Game Try
3♠		Trump-Suit Game-Try	3♥		Trump-Suit Game-Try

Table 7a: Standard Kokish 3-Way Game-Tries

Reverse Help Suit Game Try: responder is required to cue-bid the cheapest side suit in which responder would accept a help-suit try, otherwise to bid 3 of the agreed major.

*Responder bids 2N, ♠ surrogate, to accept a help-suit try in ♠.

Short Suit Game Try: Responder is asked to bid game with no wasted values in the cue-bid suit, otherwise to bid 3 of the agreed major.

** Opener's 2N, ♠ surrogate, is a short-suit try in ♠.

Trump-Suit Game-Try: Opener makes a help-suit try in the trump suit

The Kokish structure is modified to utilize the Over-Shorts strategy and to include a Trump-ask:

1♠	2♠		1♥	2♥	
2N		Reverse Help-Suit Game Try	2♠		Reverse Help-Suit Game Try
3♣		Trump-Ask	2N		Trump-Ask
3♦		♣-Short-Suit Game Try	3♣		♠-Short-Suit Game Try
3♥		♦-Short-Suit Game Try	3♦		♣-Short-Suit Game Try
3♠		♥-Short-Suit Game Try	3♥		♦-Short-Suit Game Try
-----			-----		
<u>Trump-Ask</u>			<u>Trump-Ask</u>		
1♠	2♠		1♥	2♥	
3♣	3♦	xxx or HHx (<i>relay to ask</i>)	2N	3♣	xxx or HHx (<i>relay to ask</i>)
	3♥	Axx or Kxx		3♦	Axx or Kxx
	3♠	Qxx		3♥	Qxx
-----			-----		
1♠	2♠		1♥	2♥	
3♣	3♦	xxx or HHx	2N	3♣	xxx or HHx
3♥	3♠	xxx	3♦	3♥	xxx
	3N	HHx		3♠	HHx + ♠-cue
	4♣	HHx + ♣-cue		3N	HHx
	4♦	HHx + ♦-cue		4♣	HHx + ♣-cue
	4♥	HHx + ♥-cue		4♦	HHx + ♦-cue

Table 7b: Symmetric 3-Way Game Tries with Over-Shorts

Game-Tries After 1m – 1M; 2M

Opener may raise responder's initial response of 1 of a major with 3-card support only. Then, 2N by responder is a game-try asking opener to describe their number of trumps, 3 or 4, and general strength:

1♣	1♠	1♦	1♠	1♣	1♥	1♦	1♥
2♣	2N	2♠	2N	2♥	2N	2♥	2N
<u>Common Response Structure</u>							
		3♣ : 3-card support, minimum 11 – 13 hcp					
		3♦ : 3-card support, maximum 14+ hcp					
		3♥ : 4-card support, minimum 11-13 hcp					
		3♠ : 4-card support, maximum 14+ hcp					

Table 8a: SPIRAL – Simple Version

The following treatment permits a 3-card raise may with two hand-types only:

(Unlike many agreements that permit a 3-card raise with 4432 and a worthless doubleton, the preferred re-bid with 4432 is 1N preserving responder's ability to initiate a check-back auction.)

- 1) 5332 shape with a 5-card minor and less than a 1N opening, often 11 – 14 hcp,
- 2) 5431 shape with a 5-card minor and less than reverse strength, 11 – 17 hcp.

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

Table 8b: Symmetric SPIRAL with Distribution Responses

With only 3-card support, **opener must rebid below 3 of the agreed major**:

- 5332: opener rebids his minor;
- 5431: opener bids his 4-card suit (delayed reverse)

With a maximum, opener must now raise or force to game over responder's re-bid.

With 4-card support and a minimum, **opener rebids at the 3-level**:

- Balanced: opener rebids 3 of the major;
- Unbalanced: opener rebids 3 of the next higher strain (3N or 3♠)

With 4-card support and a non-minimum, **opener jump re-bids**:

- (Semi-)Balanced: opener rebids 4 of the major
- 6-card minor: opener rebids 4 of the minor
- Splinter: opener's jump rebid is a splinter

Passed-Hand Bidding

<p><i>pass</i> 1♠</p> <p>1N <u>Puppet to 2♣, non-forcing:</u> <i>some non-preemptive raise</i></p> <p>2♣ → 2♦, constructive+</p> <p>2♦ → 2♥, constructive+</p> <p>2♥ → 3♣, constructive+</p> <p>2/3♠ Less than constructive</p> <hr/> <p><i>pass</i> 1♠</p> <p>1N <i>pass</i> Short-Circuit</p> <p> 2♣ Relay: 12 - 15</p> <p> 2♠ Sign-off: 10 - 12, 5+ ♠s</p> <p> 2N Override: 18 - 19</p> <p> 3♠ Override: 15+, 5+ ♠s</p> <hr/> <p><i>pass</i> 1♠</p> <p>1N 2♣ <u>Relay</u></p> <p> 2♦ 3+ ♠s, invitational (<i>Drury</i>)</p> <p> 2♥ 4+ ♠s, constructive raise</p> <p> 2♠ 3 ♠s, constructive raise</p> <hr/> <p><i>pass</i> 1♠</p> <p>1N 2♣ Relay</p> <p>2♦ 2♥ Splinter-Ask</p> <p> 2♠ Sign-off</p> <p> 2N Reverse Help-suit Game-try</p> <p> 3♣ Trump-suit Game-try</p> <p> 3X Over-short-suit Game-try</p> <hr/> <p><i>pass</i> 1♠</p> <p>1N 2♣ <u>Splinter-Ask</u></p> <p> 2♠ No splinter</p> <p> 2N Any Singleton</p> <p> 3♣ </p> <p> 3♦ ♣-void</p> <p> 3♥ ♦-void</p> <p> 3♠ ♥-void</p> <hr/> <p><i>pass</i> 1♠</p> <p>1N 2♣ </p> <p>2♥/♠ 2♠/pass <u>Constructive</u> Sign-off</p> <p> 2N Reverse Help-suit Game-try</p> <p> 3♣ Trump-suit Game-try</p> <p> 3X Over-short-suit Game-try</p>	<p><i>pass</i> 1♥</p> <p>1♠ <u>Puppet to 1N, forcing</u> <i>some non-preemptive raise</i></p> <p>1N → 2♣, constructive+</p> <p>2♣ → 2♦, constructive+</p> <p>2♦ → 2♠, constructive+</p> <p>2/3♥ Less than constructive</p> <hr/> <p><i>pass</i> 1♥</p> <p>1♠ 1N Relay: 10 - 15</p> <p> 2♥ Sign-off: 10 - 12, 5+ ♥s</p> <p> 2N Override: 18 - 19</p> <p> 3♥ Override: 15+, 5+ ♥s</p> <hr/> <p><i>pass</i> 1♥</p> <p>1♠ 1N <u>Relay</u></p> <p><i>pass</i> Short-Circuit</p> <p>2♣ 3+ ♥s, invitational (<i>Drury</i>)</p> <p>2♦ 4+ ♥s, constructive raise</p> <p>2♥ 3 ♥s, constructive raise</p> <hr/> <p><i>pass</i> 1♥</p> <p>1♠ 1N </p> <p>2♣ 2♦ Splinter-Ask</p> <p> 2♥ Sign-off</p> <p> 2♠ Reverse Help-suit Game-try</p> <p> 2N Trump-suit Game-try</p> <p> 3X Over-short-suit Game-try</p> <hr/> <p><i>pass</i> 1♥</p> <p>1♠ 1N </p> <p>2♣ 2♦ <u>Splinter-Ask</u></p> <p> 2♥ No splinter</p> <p> 2♠ Any Singleton</p> <p> 2N </p> <p> 3C ♠-void</p> <p> 3D ♣-void</p> <p> 3♥ ♦-void</p> <hr/> <p><i>pass</i> 1♥</p> <p>1♠ 1N </p> <p>2♦/♥ 2♥/pass <u>Constructive</u> Sign-off</p> <p> 2♠ Reverse Help-suit Game-try</p> <p> 2N Trump-suit Game-try</p> <p> 3X Over-short-suit Game-try</p>
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Table 9: Passed Hand Bidding: Relay Drury

Weak 2-Bids (Majors)

Standard treatments use 2N as an asking bid (*Ogust, Feature-ask, etc.*) after both 2♠ and 2♥. The Symmetric Majors treatment

- 2N is the asking bid after a 2♠ opening; 2♠ is the asking bid after a 2♥ opening,
- RONF – new suit bids by responder are forcing,
- Mini-Kickback: 3N after a 2♠ opening; 3♠ after a 2♥ opening

2♠	2N	Asking: <i>Feature, Ogust, etc.</i>	2♥	2♠	Asking: <i>Feature, Ogust, etc.</i>
	3♣	Natural, forcing		2N=♠	♠ surrogate, forcing*
	3♦	Natural, forcing		3♣	Natural, forcing
	3♥	Natural, forcing		3♦	Natural, forcing
	3♠	Preemptive		3♥	Preemptive
	3N	Mini-Kickback**		3♠	Mini-Kickback
				3N	To Play

Table 10: Responses to a Major-Suit Weak 2-Bid

*Responder's 2♠ is the (artificial) asking bid, so 2♠ is not available as a natural new-suit forcing bid. Instead, 2N is a surrogate bid for 2♠. Opener may still raise to 3♠ or may return to 3♥.

**Responder's direct 3N is a Keycard-ask, so 3N (to play) is not available as a natural sign-off. A responder wishing to end in 3N must first bid 2N (asking) and then follow with 3N.

Kolkata 2-Way-Ask

2♠	2N		2♥	2♠	
3♣		Poor Hand or Good Semi-Bal.	2N		Poor Hand or Good Semi-Bal.
3♦		Good hand, ♣-splinter	3♣		Good hand, ♠-splinter
3♥		Good hand, ♦-splinter	3♦		Good hand, ♣-splinter
3♠		Good hand, ♥-splinter	3♥		Good hand, ♦-splinter
<u>Secondary Ask</u>			<u>Secondary Ask</u>		
2♠	2N		2♥	2♠	
3♣	3♦	♣-feature ask, or sign-off	2N	3♣	♠-feature ask, or sign-off
	3♥	♦-feature ask		3♦	♣-feature ask
	3♠	♥-feature ask		3♥	♦-feature ask
2♠	2N		2♥	2♠	
3♣	3♦		2N	3♣	
3♥		Good hand, ♣-feature	3♦		Good hand, ♠-feature
3♠		Poor hand or no ♣-feature	3♥		Poor hand or no ♠-feature

Table 10a: Kolkata 2-Way Ask

- Primary positive response shows a splinter (over-shorts) in a good hand
- Primary negative response overloaded to show any poor hand **or** good semi-balanced hand
- Secondary ask is a specific feature-ask in the next lower suit
- Secondary positive response is 3N or relay over the ambiguous sign-off
- Secondary negative response is 3 of opener's major

Kickback

<u>Keycard Ask (♠ agreed)</u>			<u>Keycard Ask (♥ agreed)</u>		
4N	5♣	0 or 3	4♠	4N	0 or 3
	5♦	1 or 4		5♣	1 or 4
	5♥	2 or 5, not Q♠		5♦	2 or 5, not Q♥
	5♠	2 or 5, and Q♠		5♥	2 or 5, and Q♥
	5N	0 or 2 or 4 and some void		5♠	0 or 2 or 4 and some void
	6♣	1 or 3 and ♣-void		5N=♠*	1 or 3 and ♠-void
	6♦	1 or 3 and ♦-void		6♣	1 or 3 and ♣-void
	6♥	1 or 3 and ♥-void		6♦	1 or 3 and ♦-void
<u>Specific King-Ask</u>			<u>Specific King-Ask</u>		
5N	6♣	K♣	5♠	5N=♠*	K♠
	6♦	K♦, not K♣		6♣	K♣, not K♠
	6♥	K♥, not K♣, not K♦		6♦	K♦, not K♣, not K♠
	6♠	No side-suit Kings		6♥	No side-suit Kings
	6N	All: K♣ and K♦ and K♥		6♠	All: K♠ and K♣ and K♦
<u>Trump Queen-Ask</u>			<u>Trump Queen-Ask</u>		
4N	5♣/♦		4♠	4N/5♣	
5♦/♥	5♠	not Q♠	5♣/5♦	5♥	not Q♥
	6♣	Q♠ and K♣		5N=♠*	Q♥ and K♠
	6♦	Q♠ and K♦, not K♣		6♣	Q♥ and K♣, not K♠
	6♥	Q♠ and K♥, not K♣, not K♦		6♦	Q♥ and K♦, not K♣, not K♠
	6♠	Q♠ but No side-suit Kings		6♥	Q♥ but No side-suit Kings
	6N	Q♠ and K♣ and K♦ and K♥		6♠	Q♥ and K♣ and K♦ and K♥

*NT surrogate for ♠

Table 11: Kickback

Specific King-Ask

- Responder bids 6 of the major (6♠, 6♥) to deny any Kings, or 6 of the asking-suit (6N, 6♠) to show **all** three side-suit Kings; otherwise, responder cue-bids the cheapest side-suit King.
- A specific-King cue-bid denies any cheaper King. Responder also denies 3, so may have at most one additional King. The asker may cue-bid a higher suit to ask if responder owns that side-suit King in addition to the one already shown (*secondary ask*). Then, 6 of the major (6♠, 6♥) denies the asked King and 6 of the asking-suit (6N, 6♠) shows the asked King.

Trump Queen-Ask

- Responder bids 5 of the trump suit to deny possession of the trump Queen.
- Responder gives a specific King-ask response to show possession of the trump Queen. A secondary ask may be possible to locate a higher side-suit King.