

# The Universal Splinter

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by

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## References

1. **Symmetric Major Suit Raises**. Norman Pestaina.  
<http://users.cis.fiu.edu/~pestaina/SymmetricMajor.pdf>
2. **(article - Splinter Bids)**. Danny Kleinman.  
<http://dannykleinman.com/default.aspx> (Temporarily unavailable)

## Overview

The Universal Splinter convention is part of the Symmetric Major Suit Raises system. It takes the form of responder's single jump to the suit immediately lower than opener's major. It promises

- at least 4-card support of opener's major,
- shortness (singleton or void) in some yet undisclosed suit
- enough strength to force to game in opener's major

It is possible to incorporate mini-splinters, but the treatment described here is strictly game-forcing.

<b>♠ Agreed</b>	<b>♥ Agreed</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Space</b>
2N	2♠	Balanced Game-Forcing Raise	4
3♣	2N	Limit raise	3
3♦	3♣	Constructive raise	2
3♥	3♦	Splinter Game-Forcing Raise	1
3♠	3♥	Preemptive Raise	0

**TABLE 1: Symmetric Major-Suit Raises**

This system of raises is symmetric because the available space between a bid, and the next available bid of the trump suit, is the same for either major ♥ or ♠. This symmetry is an essential element of the Universal Splinter response system.

At his second turn opener may relay with the next available bid, 3 of the major, to initiate responder's disclosure of the suit and type (singleton or void) of the splinter. Instead, opener may make the second available bid as a signoff attempt; responder is expected to accept the signoff unless holding significant strength beyond a game-force.

When disclosing the splinter suit, responder does not cue-bid the short suit itself, but instead always cue-bids the next higher suit. This strategy known as *over-shorts*, is borrowed from an idea of Danny Kleinman's described in an article from his (currently unavailable) web pages: <http://dannykleinman.com/default.aspx> .

## Specifics

As described above, opener's initial response either initiates disclosure of responder's splinter, or attempts to sign-off at game:

<u>Spades</u>	<u>Hearts</u>
1♠ 3♥	1♥ 3♦
3♠ splinter disclosure relay	3♥ splinter disclosure relay
3N sign-off relay	3♠ sign-off relay

**TABLE 2: Opener's initial responses to the Universal Splinter**

Following the disclosure relay, responder makes the next available bid to indicate a singleton, and discloses the singleton suit following opener's second relay:

<u>Spades</u>	<u>Hearts</u>
1♠ 3♥	1♥ 3♦
3♠ 3N relay; 3N = some singleton	3♥ 3♠ relay; 3♠ = some singleton
4♣ 4♦ relay; ♣ - singleton	3N 4♣ relay; ♠ - singleton
4♥ ♦ - singleton	4♦ ♣ - singleton
4♠ ♥ - singleton	4♥ ♦ - singleton

**TABLE 3: Disclosing a singleton**

With a void, instead of 3N or 3♠ to show a singleton, responder makes the *over-shorts* cue-bid directly following opener's relay:

<u>Spades</u>	<u>Hearts</u>
1♠ 3♥	1♥ 3♦
3♠ 4♦ relay; ♣ - void	3♥ 4♣ relay; ♠ - void
4♥ ♦ - void	4♦ ♣ - void
4♠ ♥ - void	4♥ ♦ - void

**TABLE 4: Disclosing a void**

When opener discourages, responder must relay to accept the sign-off:

<u>Spades</u>	<u>Hearts</u>
1♠ 3♥	1♥ 3♦
3N 4♣ sign-off relay; acceptance	3♠ 3N sign-off relay; acceptance
4♠	4♥

**TABLE 5: Sign-off acceptance relay sequence**

With significant extra values, responder may decline opener's sign-off attempt by completing the over-shorts cue-bid to locate the splinter. This expresses strong slam interest opposite opener's supposed minimum and will normally be forcing:

<u>Spades</u>		<u>Hearts</u>	
1♠	3♥	1♥	3♦
3N	4♣	3♠	3N
	4♦		4♣
	4♥		4♦
	4♠		4♥

**TABLE 6: Responder declines opener's sign-off attempt**

Opener is expected to keep the bidding alive through at least one additional round, and may do so in one of three ways:

1. Opener may make a key-card ask, treating responder's answer as exclusionary. Responder may make a void-showing response at or above the level of 5 of the trump suit; then, the partnership will be forced to slam. Responder must keep this consideration firmly in mind when declining opener's sign-off attempt.
2. Opener may cue-bid in one of the non-splinter suits.
3. When responder's *over-shorts* cue-bid is below 4 of the agreed trump suit, opener's rebid of the trump suit should be interpreted as a transfer of captaincy. Responder may pass, may make the normal key-card ask, or may make an exclusionary ask only when holding a void.

### Mathe Asking Bid

Following responder's limit raise of a major suit opening, opener may make a shortness-ask slam try. In the Symmetric Major Suit Raises system, responder's bid to confirm a raise based on shortness is identical to the splinter bid:

<u>Spades</u>		<u>Hearts</u>	
1♠	3♣	1♥	2N
3♦	3♥	3♣	3♦

**TABLE 7: Responder's positive response to the MAB**

Responder's positive response to opener's slam try Mathe Asking Bid (MAB) is identical to the Universal Splinter bid, and identical continuations may be employed.

### Self-Splinter

In the Alleyne system of major suit responses, opener may self-splinter following a forcing-to-game raise of opener's major:

<u>Spades</u>			<u>Hearts</u>		
1♠	2N	Balanced Game Force	1♥	2♠	Balanced Game Force
3♥		Self-Splinter	3♦		Self-Splinter

**TABLE 8: Self-Splinter following a Balanced Game-Force**

With the self-splinter, opener temporarily transfers captaincy to responder. Continuations identical to the Universal Splinter may be employed, but with opener's and responder's roles reversed.