

MAJOR SUIT RAISE VARIATIONS

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A. Special Raise Methods

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A. Raising after 1m-1M-? Methods

(1) Losing Trick Count and Support Points

examples: **Axxx KQx QJx xxx** 8 losers / 12 support points for spades
Axxx xx KQxxx Kx 6 losers / 13+ support points
Axxx x KQxxxx Kx 5 losers / 15+

1D – 1S
?

2S : simple raise (12 – 15 support points)

3S: invitational raise (17 – 18 support points) no more than 6 losers

4S: 20+ support points, tends to deny a singleton or void, no more than 5 losers

(2) Splinters

1D – 1S
?

4C, 4H (double jump shift) : singleton or void, 20+ support points (16+ hcp)

examples: (you) (1) **AQxx Axx AQxxx x** (2) **AQxx Axx AQxxxx --**
(partner) **Kxxxx Kx Kxx xxx** **Kxxx Qx xxx KJx**

(3) 4-6 Hands

1D- 1S-
?

4D: 4-6, good diamond suit

examples: (you) (1) **AJxx Kx AQJxxx x** : bid 4D, 3 to 4 honors, 5 LTC
(2) **AQxx x AKxxxx xx** : bid 4D, can be min w/ AK
however (3) **AKxx x AJxxxx Ax** : should splinter 4H

(4) Mini-Splinters: 4 combinations

- (a) 1C – 1H (b) 1C – 1S (c) 1C – 1S (d) 1D – 1S
 3D 3D 3H 3H

17-18 support points (14–15 hcp), 4 trumps, singleton or void in bid suit, 5 or 6 loser hand

example: (you) **KQx** (partner) **xxx** (partner) **Jxx**
 AQxx **Kxxxx** (or) **Kxxx**
 x **xxx** **KQxx**
 Kxxxx **QJx** **Qxx**

Never ever raise to the 3 or 4 level with only 3 card support unless partner promises a 5-card suit as in: 1m – (1H) – 1S.

B. Raising with 3-card support

- examples: (1) **Axx xx KQxx KJxx**
 (2) **xx Axx KQxx KJxx**
 (3) **Axx KQxx KJxx xx**
 (4) **Axx x KJxxx KJxx**
 (5) **x Axx Kxxxx KJxx**
 (6) **Axx KQx Kxxxxx x**

You should raise to 2 of the major, rather than bid 1NT or 2m and not worry that partner may only have a 4-card suit. Why? Because, when it makes a difference, it is very seldom wrong and frequently is right to raise (and sometimes doesn't matter).

There are 3 cases to discuss: you have 3-card support but are considering rebidding

- (A) 1NT
(B) 2m (rebidding a minor) and
(C) 1S (after 1m – 1H)

Rebidding 1 NT. You open 1C or 1D (your choice) with **xx Axx Kxxx AJ9x** and partner bids 1H. Do you bid 1NT? You have no spade stopper, so partner will likely need 3 good ones to withstand the assault on the suit. If partner only has 1 stopper (or none) a raise to 2H is probably better. Partner can likely arrange to ruff a small spade with one of your trump, scoring a trick he would lose in 1NT.

Let's change things around – **AJ9 Axx Kxxxx xx?** This doesn't fundamentally change anything, except partner is now ruffing a small club.

When do you rebid 1NT?

Kxx Jxx AQxx Kxx Now you have stoppers in the unbid suits. No ruffing value. 1NT is best.
xxx Axx AJxx KJx No ruffing value. 3334 should bid 1NT even without spade stopper.
Kxx Axx Axxxx Kx Stopper in clubs and ruffing value. Your choice. I'd raise with controls...
QJx QJx Axxxx Kx but I rebid 1NT with soft cards. Other players than I may disagree.

(A) **Rebidding 2m. Kxx xx AJx KJxxx?** Over 1S, do not even think about rebidding 2C. "But partner doesn't know I have 5 clubs!" News flash: partner, in almost all cases, will care far more about your 3 spades than your 3 card clubs.¹ If you have game, it is far more likely to be in spades than NT. Partner probably doesn't have 4 hearts so the suit is vulnerable in NT. If he/she has 4 hearts, he/she has 5 spades (think about it!). And if partner has a game-going hand and only 4 trumps, you will still get to 3NT if you are careful.

xxx Kx Kx AQ10xxx Now you have 6 clubs, a good suit, no singleton, no spade honor. Bid 2C.
xxx x AQx AQxxxx Getting closer. Singleton, weaker long suit (bad for NT). 2C still better?
Kxx x AQx Kxxxx 2C will encourage partner holding ♣ Qxx (or even ♣Qx). Bid 2S.
x Kxx AJxxx Axxx Raise 1H to 2. 2C is a common mistake. Likely game is 4H, not 3NT. If the opponents bid 2S over 2C, bid 3H, *which shows a better hand*.
x Kxx AQxxx AKJx Bid 2C (!). Whatever partner bids you can support hearts, showing extras.

This last hand demonstrates that you should not raise to 3M with 3-card support, straining to bid a new suit, then supporting partner, *which promises extras*. Temporizing by bidding a new suit produces a bad result only when partner has a 5-card suit and passes your second bid, a rare occurrence.

When NOT to raise with 3 cards?

- (a) When you have all other suits reasonably stopped and/or no ruffing value
- (b) When you have a decent 6-card suit or are 5530 and have three small cards in partner's suit.
- (c) When you have an unbalanced hand that is about a K better than a minimum. Here you're too good to raise to 2S but don't have enough trumps to jump to 3S (eg. **Kxx x AJxxx AKxx** or **Kxx x AKJxxx AJx**) More on this below.

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¹ In fact partner will assume you have 6 clubs. While there are hands where rebidding a 5-card minor is the least of evils, this is certainly not one of them. Rebidding a 5-card minor is like peeing behind the nearest tree: it should only be done in desperation and when no other alternatives are available.

(B) **Rebidding 1S.** In keeping with the immediately preceding discussion, bid 1S over 1H with **KJxx Axx AQJxx x**, then bid 2H as you have extras (if partner passes 1S, you're in the right contract).

- (1) **KJxx Axx Axxxx x** No extras. Bid 2H; can't get there with 1S (2H later shows extras)
- (2) **KJxx Axx Axxx xx** Still 2H. Hearts likely to be better than NT. But others may disagree.
- (3) **KJxx Axx Axx xxx** 1S. No ruffing value, NT is better than hearts.
- (4) **xxxx Axx KJx KJx** 1 NT. Even if partner has 4 spades, NT may be better.

From Responder's Viewpoint

- (1) If your partner rebids 1NT rather than raising your major, he probably doesn't have 3-card support, so you don't have to guess whether to bid 2S after 1D-1S- 1NT with **A10xxx Kxx xxx xx**. If partner had 3-card support and weak clubs, he would have raised.
- (2) Your partner opens 1C and raises your 1H to 2H:
Kx KQxx AQxx xxx Bid 3NT. Partner will correct to 4H with 4-card support.
xxx Axxx AKxx xx *Do not invite with 3H!* Partner will think that you have 5. 3D best.

Raising with 3-card support is not without its problems as the examples immediately above intimate. The re-raiser must realize partner may have raised with 3 cards, the raiser must realize that is partner may be bidding so as to "check back" whether partner has raised with three, and strain to bid NT if he has done so. But the advantages outweigh the disadvantages; you'll benefit in ways that you don't even realize. Occasionally you will get to ridiculous contracts that could have – perhaps - been avoided, but far more often you will be playing 2M (or competing to 3M) and getting very good results that might not otherwise be possible.

- (1) **Weak:** When responder has a 5-card suit and a **weak** hand, you will be in the right contract (and the other contract will be wrong)

		<i>(you)</i>		<i>(partner)</i>
Kxx		Kxx	KJx	Axxxx
xx	or	x	or	x
Axxx		AJxxx	Axxxxx	xx
KQxx		KJxx	KJx	Axx

- (2) **Invitational** When responder has a 5-card suit and an **invitational** hand, you will be in the right contract. If you don't raise, you may very well get to the wrong contract. This is the case when your rebid is other than 1NT without the high card strength to accept an invitation in either your suit(s) or NT.

	<i>(you)</i>		<i>(partner)</i>
Kxx	Kxx	KJx	Axxxx
xx	or x	or x	xxx
AJxx	AJxxx	Axxxxx	xx
KJxx	Qjxx	QJx	Axx

What if partner has a 4-card suit and an invitational hand? You must modify your rebids after 1X – 1M – 2M to account for partner possibly raising with 3-card support. More on this below.

- (3) **Game Forcing** When responder has a game forcing hand, it doesn't matter whether you raise with 3-card support or not; you will always get to the right contract if you modify your rebids to account for the possibility. Another advantage of the 3-card raise with a weak doubleton is that, if partner has a 4-card suit and a good hand, partner will declare the NT contract (his holding in your weak suit will be protected).

C. Strong hands with 3-card Support

With an unbalanced hand with 17-18 support points:

1D- 1S
?

- (1) **Kxx x AQJxx AJ10x** 15 hcp, 18 sp, 6 losers

Too good to bid 2S and not enough trumps to bid 3S. Also not strong enough to bid 3C, so the default bid is 2C, showing 11-17/18 (up to just shy of a jump shift). You pray that partner corrects to 2D or anything else but pass, so you can bid spades.

- (2) **Kxx AJ10x AQJxx x**

Still too good for 2S, not enough trump for 3S, so choices are to rebid your 5-card minor (yuck, same underbid as 2S) or make slight overbid of 2H. If partner has 5 spades, he/she will now bid 2S (forcing for 1 round), and you can raise to 3S. The difference between rebidding 2C and the reverse of 2H is that the latter promises 16.

D Distinguishing Between 3- and 4-card Support

If responder bids again after you raise his or her suit, he/she has an invitational or game forcing hand (otherwise they would simply pass). Because you may only have 3-card support, partner cannot simply raise to invite or jump to game with only a 4-card suit of their own, as both of these now require 5 or more trump.

Responder:

Kxxx AQ xx KJxxx or **Jxx AJx xx Kxxx** or **KJxx AJx xx Kxxx**

1D – 1S

2S – ?

With an opening hand and the unbid suits well stopped, bid 3NT. This says “I have 4 spades . If you raised me with 3-card support, pass, otherwise correct to 4S.” Opener simply obeys.

Note that the NT contract will often only make because you raised the major suit with 3 cards:

<i>(you)</i>	<i>(partner)</i>				
Kxx	Axxx	1D	1S	1D	1S
xx	Kx	1NT	3NT	2S	3NT
Axxxx	Kx				
KQx	AJxxx	lead: HQ		lead: HQ	
		result: down 2		result: making 4	

The meanings of other bids by responder are subject to partnership agreement.

(1) Simple agreement - Bid Naturally

1D – 1S

2S - ?

2NT nat'l, NF and invitational, only 4 spades, red suits stopped

3NT natural, pass or correct

(2) Meckwell

1D – 1S
2S – 2NT

2NT= artificial bid asking opener to convey strength and trump support (3 or 4). The replies are:

3C minimum hand with 3-card support

Kxx Jx AJxxx Kxx KJx KJx A10xxx xx KJx x Axxxx Kxxx

3D maximum hand with 3 card support

KQx xx AQxxx Kxx KJx Axxx KQxxx x Kxx x AJ10xxx Axx

3H minimum hand with 4-card support

Kxxx Jx AQxxx QJ

3S maximum hand with 4-card support

Kxxx xx AQxx Ajx

3NT maximum hand with 4 card support, balanced with weak trump and cards outside

Jxxx AQ Kxxx A10x

1m – 1H; 2H – 2S* (for serious, serious partnerships only)

Once opener raises to 2H, spades may still be the better trump suit

(you) Kxxx Axx xx KQxx (partner1) AQxx KJxx Kxxx x (partner2) AQxx KJxxx Kxx x

Responder bids 2S *promising 4 spades and at least invitational values* and asking about opener's hand. Opener bids naturally and intuitively:

1C 1H
2H 2S
?

2NT **xx Kxx AQxx Kxxx** minimum, 3 hearts, <4 spades, club stopped

3NT **xx KJx AQxx KJxx** maximum

3C can't stop diamonds, 3 hearts, <4 spades, maybe 6 clubs

3D probably asking (need help), 3 hearts, <4 spades

3H minimum, 4 hearts, <4 spades

3S minimum, 4 spades

3NT max, diamonds stopped, 3 hearts, pass or correct (responder could be 4-5 in majors)

4C expert adjunct: 3415 with good clubs (3/4 honors), non-min

4D expert adjunct: 4315 with good clubs, etc.

4H maximum, 4 hearts

4S maximum, 4 spades

E. Raises in Competition

Support Doubles and Redoubles

If, after partner responds 1 of a major, the opponents overcall in a suit below 2 of partner's major (or bid a Sandwich NT) or make a takeout double, you can distinguish between 3- and 4-card support for partner by raising with 4 cards and doubling (or redoubling) to show 3-card support. The raise limits your hand to a bad 16 support points, the support double/redouble does not limit your hand

Partner Makes a Negative Double

Suppose the auction begins with partner "showing" his spade suit with a negative double:

1D – (1H) – Dbl – P
?

1S = Min with 3-card support or 4 cards and hand devalued by the auction

Axx xx KQxx QJxx or Axxx Qxx Kxxx Kxx

2S = Promises a full opening and 4 card supporting

Axxx xx KQxxx Kxx

3S = Invitational

Axxx x KQxxx AJx

If partner bids 1S over 1H, that promises a 5-card or longer suit; *in this one instance you can jump to 3S or 4S*. You should not splinter (or mini-splinter [1C-(1H)-1S-(P); 3D] without 4 trump, however. *Note that 1C – (1D) – 1H/1S and 1C/1D – (Dbl) – 1H/1S do not promise (nor deny) a 5-card suit, so you shouldn't jump with 3-card support.*

Some Special Considerations

Over 1D – (1S) – Dbl – (2S)
?

(1) **Ax Axxx AKJxx xxx**

(2) **xx Axxx AKJxx xx**

With the first hand you want to bid 3H and partner to bid game on anything but a dead minimum. With the second hand, you want to bid 3H and partner to pass unless they have

(nearly) an opening hand. Unless partner is a mind-reader (and mine are anything but), you can't have it both ways.

A useful convention here is:

Good-Bad 2NT

With the first hand, bid 3H as invitational. With the second hand, bid 2NT, requiring partner, with anything less than 11 points or so, to bid the lowest suit they are willing to play in. You can then "correct to 3H," showing a hand that wants to play in hearts, but has no interest in game. [You can extend Good-Bad 2NT to hands where opener has a long minor or both minors, and wants to distinguish between hands with invitational values (17-18) and those that just want to compete (12-15). Google this if you're interested in learning more.

Partner Shows his Major at the Two-Level (1S-2H)

Here partner promises 10+ points (12+ if playing 2/1) and at least a 5-card suit (never 4). *If you are playing 2/1*, a game force is established and you can bid 3H as forcing.

If you are playing Standard American, you have to jump to 4H with 16 points or more, as 3H shows 12- 14 points and is non-forcing (or splinter, or bid Blackwood or bid a new suit (forcing)).

Jumps in new suits (4C, 4D are splinters, *promising 4-card support or more*). You should only jump to 4 with a dead minimum opening hand (less than 13 points, no more than 3 controls, no shortness). Raise to 3H otherwise, *no matter how strong your hand, unless all you are interested in is key cards (AKxxx Kqxx KQJ x)*, in which case you can trot out RKCB.

1S – 2H

3H – ?

Frivolous 3NT

(same as Bob B.'s Serious 3NT except 3NT has the opposite meaning)

After 1S – 2H – 3H both opener and responder are unlimited, responder is obligated to cue-bid with all but the worst of hands (with less than 13 points, no more than 3 controls, and no shortness, responder can simply raise to 4H, warning partner that he needs a very powerful hand to go to slam).

Now that responder has cue bid, opener has a dilemma.

1S – 2H

3H – 3S/4C/4D

?

Responder has 13-30 hcp, opener doesn't know which (of course, if responder has 18 or more, it doesn't matter what opener does, responder will keep bidding). So opener must cue-bid, after which responder must cue-bid below 4H if possible. At some point, someone will have to decide whether bid 4H or go beyond it. This is an easy decision to make with 12-14, but more difficult with 15-16.

All sorts of things can go wrong here.

- Person with 15-16 signs off in 4H, other person passes with 15-16 passes and slam makes
- Person with 15-16 cue bids beyond 4H; partner has 12-14 and 5H contract goes down (perhaps because all of the cue bids helped lay out the defense).

Under the following circumstances 3NT is an artificial bid showing at least a K better than an opening hand:

- The auction is game forcing
- A major suit has been agreed upon as trump at the 2- or 3-level

1S – 2D

1H – 2C

2S – 3S

or

2NT – 3H

?

?

A (Italian) cue-bid promises extras, 3NT denies them. Responder now

- Over 3NT only cue bids with serious extras (18+)
- Over a cue bid must cue bid any 1st or 2nd round control below game. Absent one, bid 4 of the trump suit with a bare minimum (12-13). This warns opener (who has shown extras) that he needs *serious* extras (18+) for slam.