

Raising Partner's Major Suit

In uncontested auctions there's about every way imaginable to show support of some kind for partner's opening bid of one of a major suit. Then there are a few more that can be used in competitive auctions. The following details most of the ones I've played. I'm sure there are even more!

Non-Passed Hand Raises (No Competition)

Let's start (and finish) with raises of opening 1H bids. Obviously raises of 1S opening bids would be very similar.

1. 1NT - forcing in 2/1 game force so it can be used to (a) show three card heart support with limit raise values by bidding 1NT first and then jumping to 3H or (b) show unknown support for hearts when responder's hand is very bad but with support. Allows responder to keep both partner and the opponents in the dark about the quantity of the support while letting you attempt to follow the LAW!
2. 2H - minimum raise of 5-9 support points. If playing Bergen, shows exactly three hearts, if not playing Bergen, can be 3+
3. 2S - (a) a FIT showing jump showing hearts and spades and about 9-10. (Can also be played by a passed hand), (b) a mini-splinter, 9-10 with spade shortness and 4+ hearts, (c) long spades with less than 6 HCP's, or (d) a NHS raise (Next Higher Suit) which shows a limit raise or better with 3+ card support.
4. 2NT - (a) the very familiar Jacoby 2NT showing a forcing raise with four card support and a relatively balanced opening hand+ if playing splinters, or (b) natural showing a balanced hand with two or three card support and about 12-14 HCP's.
5. 3C - (a) raise (ala Bergen) showing 6-9 HCP's and 4 hearts, (b) a limit raise (reverse Bergen) showing 10-12 and four hearts, (c) a mini-splinter showing 9-10 HCP's with club shortness and 4+ hearts, (d) a FIT showing jump showing hearts and clubs and about 9-10 (can also be played by a passed hand) or (e) forcing raise in hearts, again usually balanced but with 4+ hearts and requiring very structured responses.
6. 3D - (a) limit raise (ala Bergen) showing 10-11 with 4+ hearts, (b) a raise showing 6-9 HCP's and 4 hearts (reverse Bergen), (c) a mini-splinter showing 9-10

HCP's with diamond shortness and 4+ hearts, (d) a FIT showing jump showing hearts and diamonds about 9-10 (can also be played by a passed hand).

7. 3H - (a) limit raise if not playing Bergen (10-11 with 4+ hearts.), (b) a preemptive raise showing 4+ trump and somewhere between 0-8 HCP's (the fewer the HCP's, the more the distribution), (c) a forcing raise (does anyone play this any more?)

8. 3S - (a) a splinter bid showing 4+ hearts and a powerful hand with shortness in spades, (b) a mini-splinter showing 4+ hearts and minimum game going values with shortness somewhere, not necessarily spades (partner can ask if interested in more than game).

9. 3NT - (a) balanced hand with 3 hearts and some specific HCP range, (b) a splinter bid showing shortness in spades with 4+ hearts and a powerful hand, or (c) a relatively good preemptive raise showing five hearts and another five card suit but few high card points.

10. 4C - (a) a splinter bid showing shortness in clubs with 4+ hearts and a powerful hand, or (b) a balanced hand with 12-14 HCP's and 4+ hearts

11. 4D - (a) a splinter bid showing shortness in diamonds with 4+ hearts and a powerful hand, or (b) a relatively good preemptive raise (better than 4H) usually with 5-5 distribution and about 8 HCP's

12. 4H - preemptive raise, 5+hearts, less than 8 HCP's (or thereabouts)

Passed Hand Raises (No Competition)

13. 2C - Reverse Drury showing limit raise with 3+ hearts

14. 2D - the second part of two-way Reverse Drury which always shows 4+ hearts and limit raise values. Playing this method, 2C would show only 3 card support with limit raise values. (In addition, you could switch 2C and 2D around so that 2C would show 4+ trumps and 2D only 3 trumps).

The above two (13 and 14) in addition to FIT showing jumps are about all that are needed for a passed hand to show support.

Raising in Competition. It seems to me that we don't often get the auction to ourselves any more. For some reason the opponent like to bid too. Not a whole lot changes when an opponent overcalls but when they double-----

15. Redouble - is usually to make it clear to partner that the opponents have possibly erred in getting in the midst of our auction. Most play that it shows at least 10 HCP's and not more than three card support for partner's opening bid. It also tends to deny having some weirdly unbalanced hand without support because it is better to start getting your suits in if that's the case.

16. 2NT - Since Jacoby 2NT no longer applies, 2NT now shows 4+ hearts with limit raise or better values (Jordan).

17. 3H - preemptive raise with 4+ hearts

18. 2H - weak raise

19. 2D - transfer to hearts to show a constructive raise.

In addition some people play that Bergen raises of 3C and 3D are still on.

If the opponents overcall.....

20. Non jump cuebids – generally used to show limit raise or better values.

21. Jump cuebids – mixed raises showing four card support and 8-10 HCP's.

While many of the power splinter bids can still be used, most of the special raises including the forcing 1NT, Jacoby 2NT and the Bergen raises are out the window.

I'm sure there are more ways to raise partner but this is enough for me. Now all I have to do is to decide which ones I want to use!

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