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# Better Bridge with Bergen

## Dummy points

Our next topic is splinter bids. This popular convention can be invaluable in getting to makeable slams when you have a good fit. It can also be the key to avoiding bad slams.

One of the key concepts will be the amount of strength needed to splinter. When raising partner's major, the number of high-card points alone does *not* determine the value of the hand. Not only is this true when considering a splinter bid, but it is also true for all raises of partner's major suit.

For example, partner opens 1♥ or 1♠. Take a look at the following three hands. The only difference between them is your distribution in the minor suits.

♠A 5 4 ♥9 7 6 2 ♦K 9 7 ♣8 7 2

♠A 5 4 ♥9 7 6 2 ♦K 9 7 3 ♣7 2

♠A 5 4 ♥9 7 6 2 ♦K 9 7 3 2 ♣2

Referring to all three as 7-point hands is silly. Because of the distribution in the minors, it is clear that the first hand is the weakest and the third hand is the strongest.

When raising partner's major suit, HCP are just one piece of the puzzle. Instead of HCP being the key, the only

relevant number is your total number of "dummy points." This is the sum of your HCP plus points for distribution.

### How to count dummy points

I suggest you always add points for long suits as soon as you pick up your hand. This is easy. Add 1 point for a five-card suit; 2 points for a six-card suit, etc. Then, if you do find a fit, you add points for your short suits:

- ❖ Add 1 point for each doubleton
- ❖ Add 2 points for a singleton and three trumps; with four or more trumps, add 2 points
- ❖ A void's value is the same as the number of trumps dummy holds
- ❖ Add 5 points for a void only with five trumps (regardless of what your friends tell you)

With neither side vulnerable, partner opens 1♥ and your right-hand opponent passes.

For each hand, there are four questions.

1. How many length points do you have?
2. How many short-suit points do you have?
3. How many dummy points do you have?
4. What would you respond?

♠A 9 8 7 5 ♥K J 5 ♦8 ♣10 9 6 3

1. Five-card suit = 1 length point.
2. Three trumps and a singleton = 2 points.

3. 8 HCP + 1 + 2 = 11 dummy points.
4. You are too strong to raise to 2♥. Respond 1♠. If opener rebids 2♣ or 2♦, you will invite game by jumping to 3♥.

♠7 5 ♥A Q 6 5 ♦10 6 4 3 2 ♣8 6

1. Five-card suit = one length point.
2. 2 points for the two doubletons.
3. 6 HCP + 1 + 2 = 9 dummy points.
4. If playing standard, raise to 2♥. If playing Bergen raises, bid 3♣, which shows a decent single raise with four trumps. If playing reverse Bergen raises, bid 3♦, which shows a decent single raise with four trumps.

♠A 4 ♥K 7 6 5 ♦A 9 7 5 4 ♣6 2

1. Five-card suit = 1 length point.
2. 2 points for the two doubletons.
3. 11 HCP + 1 + 2 = 14 dummy points.
4. Bid 2NT (Jacoby 2NT).

♠A 7 5 ♥10 6 5 4 ♦— ♣A 8 7 6 4 2

1. Six-card suit = 2 length points.
2. With four trumps, add 4 points for the void.
3. 8 HCP + 2 + 4 = 14 dummy points.
4. Bid 4♦. You are strong enough for a splinter bid. If you don't play splinter bids yet, either respond 2NT (Jacoby) or 2♣. If you even considered jumping to 4♥ after 1♥, don't tell anyone. □