



Billy Miller
dearbilly@aol.com

The Coolest Gizmos and Gadgets

"Splimit" Bids

Splinter bids come in all shapes and sizes, but the vast majority of players are familiar with only the most common examples. An especially cool type of splinter bid is one referred to as a "splimit" bid. This is a fancy term for a limited splinter. As usual, both partners must be totally on board before this treatment is used.

When you open a minor and partner responds a major, sometimes you have a nice 13- or 14-point hand with four-card support for partner's major and singleton in a side suit. The ordinary thing to do is to upgrade and jump to three of partner's major. He might not be able to evaluate accurately, however, because you have fewer high-card points than he will expect. Also, your singleton may not be what the doctor ordered. If, however, you are playing splimit bids, you get to announce your shortness and your range at the same time. It's best to think of a splimit bid as a two-and-a-half raise, *i.e.*, one not based strictly on high-card points, but also added shape.

Here are the only four splimit auctions:

- 1♣-1♠; 3♦
- 1♣-1♠; 3♥

- 1♣-1♥; 3♦
- 1♦-1♠; 3♥

Notice that these are all jump-reverses: jumps to the three level below your partner's major into a higher ranking suit than your minor. If you were to jump to the three level in a lower-ranking suit (for example, 1♦-1♠; 3♣), that would be considered a strong jump-shift, and therefore not a splimit bid.

Here's an example hand that would be ideal for a splimit bid. You open 1♣ with:

♠A J 3 2 ♥7 ♦K J 2 ♣A J 9 7 2.

When partner responds 1♠, you have every right to upgrade your hand and rebid 3♠. Instead, however, because your singleton is in a higher-ranking suit than your minor, a more descriptive bid is 3♥, a jump-reverse or splimit bid! This shows a singleton heart, four spades and about 13-14 HCP.

Let's see how this more descriptive rebid might change the decision partner makes when he knows you have this type of hand.

With:
♠K Q 5 4 ♥K J 4 ♦10 9 4 ♣8 4 3,
partner will most surely not accept the 3♥ splimit raise game invitation, but will sign off in 3♠. However, with:

♠K Q 5 4 ♥10 4 3 ♦Q 9 4 ♣Q 4 3,
partner's worthless holding in hearts (your short suit) should light him up. No question partner will gladly bid 4♠ and expect to make it on a com-

bined 23 HCP. Key information is a beautiful thing.

What are you giving up to play splimit bids? Not much. It is true that it is possible to use this jump-reverse for something else, but I seriously doubt whatever it is would come up more often than these splimit bids. If, for example, you have an opening hand with a five-card major and a six-card minor, you can and should open the minor and rebid the major twice, if possible. This type of reverse, of course, shows a good hand with at least 5-6 pattern in the respective suits. No need to jump-reverse to show that type of hand.

An additional but rarely used treatment of the splimit bid occurs with the hand that is so monstrous that a normal four-level splinter would not do it justice, a hand such as:

♠A Q 3 2 ♥4 ♦A K Q 9 4 ♣A Q 3.

Say you open 1♦ instead of an awkward 2♣, expecting partner to respond 1♥, but partner surprises you with 1♠. A splinter jump to 4♥ is an underbid with this type of hand. Instead, you can fire out a 3♥ splimit bid. If partner signs off in 3♠, you will raise to 4♠. Partner will know you have a monster, bigger than a 4♥ splinter. If partner jumps to 4♠, you will know that partner will think he can make 4♠ opposite a two-and-a-half spade raise. You have plenty of reason to continue the bidding.

Splimit bids are fun and very potent. Give them a try, but please, not against me! □