

Invitational Jump Shifts

Pete Matthews Jr – <https://3nt.xyz> – © June 14, 2025

Most partnerships will be well-served by playing that all three club responses to a one-level opening bid are natural invitations with a good suit. Because such hands are difficult to bid without this jump shift, and easy to bid with it, most examples in the literature are for clubs, such as:

1. ♠ A 7 ♥ 9 3 ♦ 10 5 3 ♣ A Q 10 8 3 2

Partner opens one of a suit, and we jump to 3 ♣ on hand [1]. Opener passes; or makes a natural continuation, often reaching 3 NT.

When, as we recommend, a 2 ♣ response would be forcing to game, with hand [1], the only other plan over a major-suit opening would be to respond 1 NT. If opener rebids in a red suit, our 3 ♣ rebid would be weak, so we would be reduced to inviting game with 2 NT. (When opener rebids their suit, our weak hands pass, so 3 ♣ could be invitational.)

In this article, our *default jump shift response by an unpassed hand*, into any suit, is a natural invitation, with a good suit of at least six cards. *Any bid by opener over the jump shift is forcing to 3 NT.*

By a passed hand, or in competition, our default jump shift is an invitational fit-showing jump shift, as described in *EZ-Expert Bidding Tools* (“the book”).

Ramifications

Playing one-way new minor forcing (NMF), the ramifications of invitational jump shifts are significant. (If you play two-way NMF or XYZ, the ramifications should be manageable, and this section may be only a curiosity.)

Rule: After a one-level response in a suit, when an invitational jump shift was available, responder’s later jump in that suit – or in opener’s *minor* – is forcing.

2. ♠ 3 ♥ K Q 9 8 3 2 ♦ A 10 3 ♣ 9 7 2
1 ♣ – 2 ♥

With hand [2], over a minor suit opening, we would respond 2 ♥, invitational.

3. ♠ 3 ♥ K Q 9 8 3 2 ♦ A 10 3 ♣ A Q 2

1 ♣ – 1 ♥; 1 ♠ – 3 ♥

1 ♣ – 1 ♥; 1 NT – 3 ♥

Because the invitational jump was available, our jump rebid to 3 ♥ is forcing on either auction for hand [3].

4. ♠ 3 ♥ K Q 3 2 ♦ A 10 3 ♣ A Q 10 5 3

1 ♣ – 1 ♥; 1 ♠ – 3 ♣

1 ♣ – 1 ♥; 1 NT – 3 ♣

Whether the jumps for the hand [4] auctions are forcing or invitational is an option in the book. When playing jumps in our own suit as forcing, we do the same in opener's minor suit – the expert approach – see the rule above. This jump promises 5-card support for opener's minor suit and does not deny five cards in our own major suit. (With a weak hand we bid only 2 ♣. A jump to 3 ♦, the *other* minor, is weak: 2 ♦ is NMF.)

5. ♠ 3 ♥ K Q 7 3 2 ♦ 10 3 ♣ A J 10 5 3

6. ♠ 3 ♥ K Q 7 3 2 ♦ 10 3 2 ♣ A J 10 3

7. ♠ 3 ♥ K Q 7 3 ♦ 10 3 2 ♣ A J 10 5 3

1 ♣ – 1 ♥; 1 NT – 2 ♦ [NMF]; 2 NT [no major] – 3 ♣

When we have invitational values and five cards in either our own major or opener's minor, we use NMF to explore – and our subsequent non-jump bid of opener's minor is invitational. We bid this way on hand [5, 6, or 7]. Note that if opener does not bid a major on hand [6], we prefer to play in our sure club fit.

Consider this auction, where there is no new minor:

1 ♣ – 1 ♦; 1 NT – ?

8. ♠ 8 ♥ A J 7 ♦ A Q J 9 5 3 ♣ Q 3 2

With a solid partner, we would auto-splinter 3 ♠ on hand [8]. If in doubt, 3 ♦ is forcing, since a 2 ♦ jump shift response would be invitational for us.

9. ♠ 8 ♥ J 7 ♦ A Q J 9 5 3 ♣ A K 8 2

On real deal [9] and the same auction, we need the jump to 3 ♣ over opener's rebid to be forcing over 1 NT, per our rule and as recommended in the book.

10. ♠ K Q 9 8 3 2 ♥ 8 2 ♦ A 10 3 ♣ 9 7

On hand [10], we respond 2 ♠ to one of any suit.

11. ♠ K Q 9 8 3 ♥ Q 8 2 ♦ A 10 3 ♣ 9 7

On hand [11], we want to show our spades to help partner when we invite game in hearts. Our subsequent jump to 3 ♥ is *invitational*. (The delayed jump is forcing only into opener's *minor* suit.)

More Details

12. ♠ K J 3 2 ♥ 7 ♦ 9 8 ♣ Q 9 8 7 4 2
1 ♦ – 1 ♠; 1 NT – ?

2 ♣ would be NMF, so our jump to 3 ♣ on [12] insists on playing right there.

13. ♠ A K 5 ♥ Q ♦ 9 8 4 ♣ Q 9 8 7 4 2
1 ♦ – ?

Hand [13] is from “It’s Your Call” (1) in the *Bridge Bulletin*, June 2025. With all choices flawed, five of 13 panelists chose 3 ♣ (invitational). Three chose a revolting 2 ♣ game force, and two chose 1 ♠ (fine with a drop dead ♠ K-9-5, but if we bid again here, we risk a 3-card preference). The other three chose 1 NT or invited with 2 NT (the author’s second choice) or 2 ♦.

14. 1 ♣ – 1 ♥; 1 NT – 2 ♦ [NMF]; 2 NT [non-forcing] – ?

In auction [14], responder has at least invitational values, has denied a good 6-card suit (by not bidding 3 ♥ yet), has denied a forcing raise of clubs, and has asked for three hearts or four spades. Opener has neither major and lacks game values. This plan seems best for responder’s key actions:

Pass Many invitational hands, including those with a bad 6-card suit.

3 ♣ Natural and non-forcing. (3 ♣ instead of NMF would have forced.)

3 ♥ Natural and forcing with a bad 6-card or great 5-card suit such as A-K-Q-10-4, offering a choice of games:

♠ A 5 ♥ K 9 7 5 4 3 ♦ K J 4 ♣ Q 2

Into 3 ♦. The invitational jump shift into 3 ♦ wins when our 1NT-response is only semi-forcing, or when a spade-opener rebids 2 ♥ over 1NT-forcing (which would make our 3 ♦ rebid mean “play here”). However, over {1 M - 3 ♦}, if opener’s lone side stopper is in clubs, they cannot bid it below 3 NT.

Rule: with two suits in doubt [clubs and the other major here], bidding one shows a stopper in that suit. With one suit in doubt, bidding that suit asks for a stopper, or in desperation, half a stopper (Q-x or J-x-x).

We have a choice for showing stoppers, over an invitational 3 ♦:

- ☐ We play by rule and have no way to show a club stopper over 3 ♦.
- ☐ We assume the partnership has clubs stopped. Since that leaves only one suit in doubt, bidding the other major *asks* for a stopper there.
- ☐ The ambiguous major: opener's rebid of their major implies a club stopper; however, opener may have extra length in the major with no side stopper (removing 3 NT to diamonds or the major shows this hand, and is non-forcing – an exception – not a slam try).

As always, most important is to have an agreement that we remember.

Into 3 ♥. Over a 1 ♠ opening, we have two ways to 3 ♥: responding 1 NT (planning to bid 3 ♥ next) and the jump shift. We three choices of system:

- ☐ Bidding 1 NT first shows two spades (and 3 ♠ over 3 ♥ is to play); the jump shift shows at most one spade.
- ☐ Bidding 1 NT first shows a weaker suit than the jump shift.
- ☐ We seldom bid 1 NT first – it's semi-forcing, and we dare not play there.

Tucker

Playing Tucker, responder's 2 ♠ jump shift response to a 1 ♥ opening promises at least five spades and is forcing to game. This supersedes the invitational jump shift. Continuations are described in my article, "Tucker over One Heart."

The Tucker 1 ♠ response to 1 ♥ has no forcing continuations for responder. Responder's jumps are invitational; any non-jump suit bid is natural and weak. Occasionally, the 1 ♠ responder may have minimum game values, planning to bid 3 NT or 4 ♥ next. The key features for this approach: a minimum game force, only four spades, and neither the ace nor king of our potential 2/1 suit (a liability in a [non-]serious 3 NT slam auction).

Opener's 1 NT rebid shows 3-card spade support and is *forcing*. This resolves the "major nightmare" hand, six of mine and three of yours, as well as finding 5-3 spade fits in general. (With bad spades in a 4=1=4=4 hand, respond 1 NT to avoid a 4-3 spade fit. After {1 ♥ – 1 ♠; 1 NT - ?} responder's minor suit promises five and at most a stiff heart.)

Backstory

Experts in the Huntsville Alabama area, including Disa Eythorsdottir, recommend natural, invitational jump shifts across the board. This is also Bridge Bulletin Standard.

Some experts, including Steve Weinstein, recommend that, after an invitational jump to 3 ♦, the partnership is assumed to have a club stopper – they bid the other major over 3 ♦ to *ask* for a stopper there.

Bergen-Style Limit Raise. Playing 4-card constructive (mixed) jump raises across the board, we need a limit raise over a major-suit opening. Gary Schwartz and I handle that with Swedish Jacoby 2 NT, as described in the book. It's simpler to use a Bergen-style jump shift to 3 ♦ – unless we play 3 ♦ as a natural invitation.

Summary. Andrew Hanes and I have adopted the methods presented in this article. Here is an update to his summary:

1. By an unpassed hand, all jump shifts (except for our Tucker 1 ♥ – 2 ♠) show a good 6+ suit with invitational values and deny a 4 card major on the side.
 - A. 1 m – 1 M; 1 NT – 3 om Play here (weak), the way to insist on a 6-card minor.
 - B. 1 ♣ – 1 ♦; 1 any – 3 ♣ Forcing to game.
 - C. 1 ♣ – 1 ♦; 1 any – 3 ♦ Forcing to game.
 - D. 1 m – 1 M; 1 NT – 3 M Forcing to game (good suit, possible slam interest).
2. By a passed hand or in competition, a jump shift into an unbid suit is invitational and fit showing.