

NON-JUMP SPLINTERS

What is the meaning of the 4♣ bid in these auctions?

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♦
2♠	3♥
3♠	4♣

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
3♦	3♠
4♣	

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
1NT	3♦
3♥	4♣

Whatever the meaning, 4♣ can hardly show a suit. The natural bid with a 5-4-4-0 or 4-4-4-1 hand is 3NT, not 4♣.

Perhaps 4♣ is a vague sort of cue bid, accepting partner's suit as trump. If so, the bid implies short clubs. Let's make a definite rule that the 4♣ bid *promises* short clubs, and see if any benefit results.

There is a maxim that the bidding of three suits, including a jump, promises a singleton or void in the fourth suit. This generally accepted rule is a liability with many hands. Marshall Miles gives this example: You open 1♥ with ♠K3 ♥AKQ76 ♦72 ♣AKQ4, and the bidding goes:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
3♣	3♠
?	

Marshall says that a raise to 4♠ would promise a singleton or void in diamonds, so he would reluctantly bid 4♣ instead. A better way to handle this situation is to say that a 4♠ bid would *deny* short diamonds, with which opener bids 4♦. This would be a non-jump splinter, showing something like: ♠K76 ♥AKQ76 ♦4 ♣AQ104.

Non-jump splinters are defined as fourth suit bids at the four or five level, when partner has bid and rebid just one suit. He may have bid notrump somewhere along the way, but his only suit bids have been in a single suit. There is just one situation in which a non-jump splinter may be made at the three level:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♥
3♣	3♥
3♠	

The 3♠ bid is ambiguous. Opener could have either of these two hands:

1) ♠A32 ♥7 ♦AKQ32 ♣AQJ3

2) ♠7 ♥A32 ♦AKJ32 ♣AQJ3

Opener will clarify her hand on the next round. Responder assumes for the moment that opener has short hearts, as in hand 1), and bids accordingly. *Responder* cannot make a non-jump splinter bid at the three level, because fourth suit bids by responder at that level are Fourth Suit Artificial (see section 4-10).

More examples:

Opener	Responder
1♠	3♥
3♠	4♣
4♠	5♠

Responder denies a singleton or void in diamonds, with which he would bid 5♦, not 5♠.

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣
2NT	3♦
3♠	4♠

Responder does not have short hearts, which would call for a 4♥ bid.

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♥
2♠	3♣
3NT	4♦

Responder has a singleton or void in diamonds, plus spade support. With two diamonds, she would bid 4♠.

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♣
2♠	3♣
5♣	

Opener has ♠AK87 ♥AQJ32 ♦32 ♣K10. In this auction the singleton-showing bid in diamonds would be a standard (i.e., jump) splinter bid of 4♦.

The rule that the bidding of three suits, including a jump, promises a singleton or void in the fourth suit would still apply in other situations:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
3♣	3NT
4♠	

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
3♣	3♥
3♠	

In these auctions opener promises short diamonds, and a 4♦ bid instead of the spade raise would not show spade support and short diamonds. Responder has not bid and rebid just one suit, so the necessary conditions for a non-jump splinter are lacking.