

Fit-Showing Jumps and Mixed Raises

By Neil H. Timm

Most partnerships open a major suit with a 5-card major where a good fit invitational raise by responder requires 4+card support and 10-12 dummy points. However, we also know that responder has a minimal hand with 6-9 points, an invitational hand with 10-11 points and a game force hand with 12+points.

The opening bidder is said to have a “minimum” hand with 13-15 points, a “strong” hand with 16-18, and a “maximum” with 19-21 points.

Observe that after a “limit raise” that $13+12=25$, $14+12=26$, and that $15+12=27$ so that with a major suit fit game is likely when responder has 12 dummy points!

A standard practice for Standard American (SA) players shows a limit raise in a major suit by bidding: 1M-3M. Many 2/1 pairs often use this same bid if they first learned SA and now play 2/1.

The primary problem with this practice is that it becomes difficult for the opening bidder to determine whether responder has the required 12points for game; there is no bidding room to ask!

For this reason, many 2/1 partnerships play some form of “Bergen” raises (first published in 1982) which eliminate the problem since it provides an asking bid to determine whether partner has the required 12 dummy points (see for example Timm’s Bridge Bit: “Bergen” Raises – An Overview).

Recall that using Bergen raises the bid of 1NT* may be forcing or semi-forcing with 7-12 dummy points and 2NT*=Jacoby shows 13+ dummy points with a 4+ card support for the major. A bid of 1M-3M shows 0-6 dummy points and 4-card support.

Many play that Bergen raises are off over interference or a X, while others may not if a Bergen 3-level bid may be made bid over interreference, and they often also use a version of BROMAD (Bergen Raise Over Major Double) over a X.

Many bridge experts prefer not to play Bergen since the bids help the opponents more than the partnership!

Fit-Showing Jump Bids

An alternative approach is to use Fit-Showing Jump (FSJ) bids which show 10-11 dummy points so that now 2NT*=12+ points and 1M-3M=0-6 dummy points with 4-card support.

How are FSJ bids defined over 1M with a 5-card major? A FSJ bid shows both a 4-card fit with partner and an independent 4-card suit with one bid. Yes, 8/9 cards in two suits (e.g., 4-4,4-5, 3/4-6). The side suit is NEVER weak, it has 2 of the top 3 or 3 of the top 5 honors. With only 3-card support for the major, the major suit must contain an honor: AKQJ.

Your partner opens 1♠ and you hold the following example 1 hand:

♠K567 ♥7 ♦KQ987 ♣952

You have 8HCP + 1 Length point + 2 shortness points with 11 dummy points and a 4-card spade suit. You would make the same bid with a doubleton heart and a doubleton club, again with 11 dummy points counting 1 for each doubleton.

With at least two of the top three honors in diamonds, you bid 3♦*=FJS.

Example 2: Partner opens 1♥ and you hold: ♠72 ♥A107 ♦532 ♣KJ1072. You hold 8HCP + 1 length point + 1 shortness point and bid 3♣*=FSJ with 3 of the top 5 honors in clubs and 3-card heart support, holding a top honor.

By showing a fit, a good side suit, and a good hand, the opener is in a better position to evaluate “fit” cards, wasted values, a double fit and more. Since the bid shows 10-11 dummy points some play it ON even if partner is a passed hand; however, this is by agreement.

A great advantage of FSJ bids is that they may be used when partner overcalls a major with 10-15HCP. With 11 dummy points and a maximum of 15HCP game is possible. Recall that Bergen bids do not apply when making a major suit overcall.

Returning to the above example 1 above, suppose the bidding went: 1♣ - 1♠ - Pass - ? and you held the same hand. Your partner overcalled a major with 10-15 HCP. The bid of 3♦* by you is again a FSJ bid showing 10-11 dummy points. Partner with 15HCP may show game interest.

Can a FSJ bid be used over a minor? The answer is yes! Consider the auction: Pass Pass 1♣ Pass; 2♥*=10-11HCP with 5-hearts and 4-clubs.

Mixed Raises

What happens when the opponents interfere with a X or a 2-level bid? In these cases, the FJS bids are called Mixed Raises (MR) and show 7-9 dummy points. Note that a “MR” is like a constructive raise, they are great bids since the 3-level bids put maximum pressure on the Advancer (the opponent). For example: 1♠/1♥ - X - 3♥*/3♣*= MR or 1♠ - 2♦ - 3♥*= MR/3♠*=0-6 is preemptive.

The MR may also be a Jump Cue bid: 1♦ - 1♥ - Pass - 3♦*=7-9 with 4-hearts and 4+diamonds. However, in the sequence: 1♠ - 2♥ - 3♥ then the jump cue bid takes precedence over the MR and shows 10+ dummy points.

Be careful, some partnerships reverse the meaning for FSJ bids and MRs in that the FSJ=7-9 and the MR=10-11.

FJS and MR are highly effective conventions in competitive auctions; however, they must be carefully discussed to avoid mishaps.

For example, the bidding goes:

1♥ - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4♣*

Is 4♣* a MR or a splinter?

This is a MR why? A jump to the 4-level is only a splinter if there is no MR available.

- (1) 1♣ - 1♥ - Pass - 3♦*=MR
- (2) 1♣ - 1♥ - Pass - 4♦*=Splinter

The same rule applies to FJS bids if the opening bidding was:

1♥ - Pass - 3♦*=FJS/4♦*=splinter

Many define Fit-Showing Jump bids as 9/10-11 dummy points as proposed by Andrew Robson and Oliver Segal (1993), "Partnership Bidding at Bridge -The Contested Auction" **over either an opening bid or an overall**. This is the approach used by "Bridge Hands" where MR=FSJ-A where A denotes the Advancer and over and opening bid it is denoted as FSJ-R with 8-11 dummy points.

To be consistent with Bergen I have tried to differentiate between Fit-Showing Jump Bids (10-11) and Mixed Raises (7-9). This is consistent with Rodwell, Eric (2017, P. 43), "Eric Rowell's Bidding Topics", Baron Barclay; however, he uses the MR "jump" bids with or without interference.