

## **Esther Discusses "Jump Shift Bids: By Opener, Responder, Overcaller, and as a 'Passed Hand' "**

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A "jump shift" bid is a bid in which (1) **Opener** in his second bid (a) shifts bid Suits and (b) jumps an extra bidding level more than is required to make his bid "sufficient", or (2) **Responder** after his first bid (a) in his second bid shifts Suits and (b) jumps an extra bidding level, or (3) **Overcaller** (a) bids a different Suit than the Opponent who opened, and (b) jumps an extra bidding level, or (4) a "**Passed Hand**" bids a new Suit not bid by Partner or Opponents, and (b) jumps an extra bidding level. Each of these "jump shift" bids has a *different* meaning. Of course, these are always matters of "Partnership Agreement", and different Partners may play these "jump shifts" in different ways.

Some Partners play certain "jump shift" bids as "*strong*", while others play the *same* "jump shift" bidding sequences as "*weak*". Because "jump shift" bids can show *different* Hands, depending upon Partnership Agreement, it is critical that Partners thoroughly discuss their bidding choices, and fully agree as to their decisions! In the words of Larry Cohen<sup>2</sup>, winner of **25** North American Bridge Championships, and author of the

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<sup>1</sup> **Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen** is a *fictitious*, not real person. This "Esther Bridge Lesson" was actually written by Bruce Thompson.

<sup>2</sup> Larry Cohen's article, "**Jumping Around**", is available at:

<https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/jumping-around>

hugely influential 1992 book, To Bid or Not to Bid: The LAW of Total Tricks:

**In bidding, jumps are *dangerous* if they mean something different to you and [P]artner. An old classic: what does the auction 1C-P-2H mean? The answer: it's either a weak bid or**

**a strong bid. Great! If you haven't discussed this with [P]artner, you shouldn't do it! Jump bids have very specific meanings, but sometimes it's best to not make a jump bid if there's a chance [P]artner could get confused. [emphases added]**

Discussed herein are the recommendations of *moi*, Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, regarding the ways that I prefer to play "jump shift" bids. You and Partner *quite reasonably* may prefer to play other ways. But the critical thing in bridge is always **COMMUNICATION**, and that you and Partner are singing always off the same song music sheets.

### **"Jump Shifts" in Competition: ALWAYS Weak!**

If Partner opens, and RHO Overcalls, any "jump shift" by you is **ALWAYS Weak!** So, in the example, Partner: 1H, RHO: 1S, YOU: 3D, your 3D bid is "natural", showing Diamonds with a reasonable Ron Klinger "Suit Quality Test" Score ("SQT" Score)<sup>3</sup>. A "weak jump shift" bid by Responder says, "Partner, I think we will make a 3D contract, and I suggest we 'drop dead' here. If you bid over my bid, you better have a good reason to do so!" This bid also denies support for Partner's Hearts!

### **"Jumps" and "Jump Shifts" by Opener: ALWAYS Strong!**

A "jump" or a "jump shift" bid by Opener is **ALWAYS Strong!** In the words of Larry Cohen in his "Jumping Around" article, "...An [O]pener can **never** make a subsequent 'weak' jump. If you

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<sup>3</sup> The Ron Klinger "Suit Quality Test" ("SQT") Score is computed by adding together (1) the number of cards you hold in the Suit, and (2) the number of Honors you hold in the Suit, including the 10. For example, if you hold A,J,T,9,8,5 your "SQT" Score is 6 + 3 = 9. You can usually bid to a level that equals the "SQT" Score - 6, so, in this this example, because 9 - 6 = 3, a bid to the 3 level may be reasonable.

had enough to open the bidding, your [H]and can't be weak" [emphasis added].

Any non-jump-shift bid by Opener in either (1) his originally-bid Suit, or (2) Responder's bid Suit, shows **16-18** HCPs, with length and a reasonable "**SQT**" **Score** in the Suit in which you jump. This "jump" is **non-forcing**, even for 1 Round. After you make this bid, Partner becomes the "Captain", and will set the final contract.

On the other hand, a "jump shift" bid by Opener, always shows (1) strength (at least **13+** HCPs, usually **16-19** HCPs), and (2) a good "**SQT**" **Score** in the new Suit. A "jump shift" by Opener is "natural", and always "**Game forcing**", because Partner/Responder must have shown some HCPs, *otherwise you would not make a "Game forcing" bid*. When you as Opener make a "jump shift" bid, (1) you opened the bidding, (2) Partner made a Response bid, showing some amount of positive HCPs, and (3) you are bidding a second time in a new Suit. By now you should have a pretty clear idea of how you want the auction to proceed after your "jump shift" bid.

As an example, let's say you hold:

**S:** A Q J 8 6      **H:** K Q T 9 5      **D:** A      **C:** K 8      (19)

When you hold 2 Majors both with 5 cards, and at least approximately the same "Suit Quality", you should open the higher-ranked Suit.<sup>4</sup> So, here, you would open 1**S**. (If you held a 6-card Major with basically the same cards as these, you might open 2**C**.) Opponents PASS at each turn. Partner as Responder bids 1**NT**, a "2 Over 1"<sup>5</sup> bid showing (1) less than ~13 HCPs, and (2) denies holding 3+ Spades. Your second bid as Opener of a "jump shift" to 3**H** shows Partner that you hold (1) a 2-Suited Hand (2) with boatloads of HCPs.

### **"Jump Shifts" by Responder: ALWAYS Weak!**

The widest variations across Partnerships occurs with respect to playing "jump shifts" by Responder, when Responder's

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<sup>4</sup> If you were 4-4 in the Majors, you instead would open by bidding your lower-ranked Suit: Hearts.

<sup>5</sup> Within the "**Esther Bridge Lessons**", see: "**Convention #1: '2 Over 1'**".

RHO PASSES, as "strong" or "weak". (Again, "jump shifts" by Responder in competitive auctions are **always Weak!**) I personally prefer to play my "jump shifts" when my RHO PASSES as **always Weak!** So, for example, in an auction that proceeds, Partner: 1H, RHO: PASS, ME: 2S, I am saying, "Partner, I believe that we will make a 2S part-score contract in the Spade Major, but nothing better. I suggest that we 'drop dead'".

### **If You Play Responder "Jump Shifts" as ALWAYS Strong!**

Traditionally, players who played "jump shifts" by Responder as **always Strong** played Responder's "jump shift" bid as showing **19-22** HCPs. And you certainly can play that system. But, of course, holding so many HCPs will be quite rare. Indeed, your probability of holding **19-22** HCPs is 0.0233, or **2.23%**.

Paul Soloway proposed an *alternative system* for Responder "jump shift" bids called "**Soloway '4-way' Jump Shifts**". His system means your "jump shift" as Responder does not mean *one, single* showing, and instead shows that you hold:

1. A strong Hand with (1) **17+** HCPs, and (2) **ONE long, strong Suit** holding at least **2 of the 3** top Honors; or
2. An intermediate Hand with (1) **13-16** HCPs, and (2) long, **very solid** Honors (A,K,Q) in **1 Suit**, and some "protected" control cards in other Suits, or voids or singletons,; or
3. A "balanced" Hand with (1) **17-19** HCPs, and (2) a **good 5-card Suit**; or
4. A Hand with (1) **16+** HCPs, and (2) a good 5+ card Suit, and (3) **4+** card support for Opener/Partner's Opened Minor, or **3+** card support for Opener/Partner's bid Major.

Of course, "4 ways" is a lot to remember, and furthermore, does not "limit" the "Jumper's" hand very specifically. Thus, Partner has limited guidance in formulating any response. So Partners might wish to modify the Soloway system to a narrower range of "ways"!

### **"Jump Shifts" by Overcaller: ALWAYS Weak!**

In modern bridge most players do not play "jump shift" Overcalls bids as strong. Instead, if you hold a Big Hand and

Opponents bid a Suit, you as Overcaller show Partner your strength not by a "jump shift" bid, but instead by a **DOUBLE** of Opponents' Suit bid, followed by a subsequent bid of a new Suit! For example, if the auction proceeds:

RHO: 1**D**      YOU: DOUBLE      LHO: PASS      Partner: 1**S**  
RHO: PASS      YOU: 2**H**,

you are showing Partner (1) 5+ Hearts and (2) **17-19** HCPs!

If you instead DOUBLE Opponent's 1**NT** opening bid<sup>6</sup>, rather than Opponents opening of a Suit bid, you are saying to Partner, "I hold **15-17** HCPs, no void or singleton, no more than one doubleton. Pretend I had *myself* opened 1**NT**. **ALL** systems (Stayman, transfers) are **ON!**" This DOUBLE of Opponent's 1**NT** opening bid is NOT a "demand" DOUBLE, and Partner can leave the DOUBLE in if Partner feels this will result in a better Board Score.

Afterall, if an Opponent holds 15-17 HCPs, and Partner also holds 15-17 HCPs, and you know your own HCP holding, you may well know that the Opponent opening 1**NT** is "going DOWN", because in the words of the Savannah Grand Lifemaster who some players call "Yoda", "Points are for No Trump [not Suit bids!]," and your Opponents don't got enough HCPs to make a 1**NT** contract! This will be very sweet if Opponents are Vulnerable!

So, most Partnerships play a "jump shift" Overcall of Opponents' Suit bid as **ALWAYS Weak**, simply because you have other ways to show Partner your strength! A weak "jump shift" Overcall shows (1) 5-10 HCPs, (2) 6+ cards in a Suit Overcalled at the 2 level, and 7+ card in a Suit Overcalled at the 3 level, (3) with good "Suit Quality" in the bid Suit. Weak "jump shift" Overcalls are intended to obstruct Opponents' further bidding, or entice Opponents to bid too high to an unmakeable contract!

### **"Fit-Showing Jump Shifts" by a PASSEd-Hand Responder**

Just as Opener can not make a "Weak Jump Shift" bid, because Opener had sufficient HCPs to open, a PASSEd Hand cannot make a "Strong Jump Shift" or "Strong Jump" bid. However, a PASSEd Hand can certainly make a "jump" *support* bid in Partner's

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<sup>6</sup> For more information, within the "Esther Bridge Lessons", see Section #6 of "Convention #14: **6 Not-for-Penalty Doubles**".

bid Suit. For example, in an auction, YOU: PASS, RHO: PASS, Partner: 1**S**, RHO: 2**D**, and YOU hold:

**S**: Q, J, 9, 8, 3      **H**: K, Q, 8      **D**: 3      **C**: J, 8, 6, 5, 4 (9),  
you certainly could "jump" to 3**S** on your second bid!

However, there is a special "jump shift" convention called "**Fit-Showing Jump Shifts**"<sup>7</sup> by Responder that some Partners play. The "**Fit-Showing Jump Shift**" is *only* made by a PASSEd Hand Responder, and again, as a "PASSEd Hand" you must be making a "weak Jump Shift" bid when you as a PASSEd Hand Responder bid this convention! The "**Fit-Showing Jump Shift**" shows (1) 4-card *support* for Partner's bid Major, and (2) a 5+ card "side Suit" with decent "Suit Quality". For example, if the auction proceeds:

YOU: PASS      LHO: PASS      Partner: 1**S**      RHO: PASS  
and you hold:

YOU (10)  
**S**: A J 9 3  
**H**: 8 5  
**D**: 8 4  
**C**: K Q T 7 4,

you could bid 3**C**, thus promising Partner (1) 4-card Spade support with Honors, and (2) 5+ Clubs, with Honors, thus implying a 2-Suited Hand with ruffing potential in the 2 unbid Suits.

Partner will know that your bid "supports" Spades, because if you only wanted to (1) deny Spades, and (2) show Clubs, you would have merely instead bid 2**C**! Of course, if you play this convention, you can no longer "jump" in Clubs to (1) deny Spades, and (2) show a very long Club holding.

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<sup>7</sup> This convention is described in somewhat more detail in Neil Rosen's article, "Fit-showing Jumps", in a June, 2013 issue of the English Bridge Union's magazine, English Bridge. See: <https://www.ebu.co.uk/article-index>