

Inverted Raises

Some partnerships prefer to reverse the meaning of a raise of opener's minor to the two level and a jump raise to the three level. This is referred to as *inverted minor-suit raises* and works as follows:

- A raise of opener's minor to the two level shows 10 or more points and is forcing for one round.
- A jump raise of opener's minor to the three level is weak, showing fewer than 10 points.

The advantages to this approach are:

- Responder can raise preemptively to the three level with a weak hand and a good fit for opener's suit. This is more effective in keeping the opponents out of the auction than a raise to the two level. This is similar to the concept of weak jump raises over a major suit.
- When responder has a limit raise of opener's minor — 10 or more points — the partnership has more opportunity to explore for the best contract. An immediate limit raise to the three level leaves less room to explore for a contract of 3NT — a more likely contract than 5♣ or 5♦ when opener has enough to accept responder's invitation.
- With a forcing raise of opener's minor suit, responder can start with a single raise, since it's forcing for one round. Having shown support for the minor suit, responder can then keep the bidding going until game is reached. Playing limit raises with no immediate forcing raise, responder has a more difficult time showing support — often having to go through fourth suit forcing (see Chapter 6) before raising opener's minor.

Here are some examples of responding to an opening bid of 1♣ when the partnership uses inverted minor-suit raises:

♠ 9 5
♥ 7 6 4
♦ Q 3
♣ K J 9 6 3 2

Raise to 3♣. This is a weak — preemptive — raise. Hopefully, the partnership can take eight or nine tricks with clubs as the trump suit, even if opener has a minimum-strength hand. At the same time, it will be more difficult for the opponents to enter the auction following a 3♣ bid than if you raised to only 2♣.

♠ 4 2
♥ K J 8
♦ Q 8 3
♣ A J 8 7 5

Raise to 2♣. This is forcing for one round and shows at least the values for a limit raise. If opener has some strength in spades, the partnership is likely to belong in a notrump contract. If not, the partnership can settle for partscore in clubs — or game if opener has extra strength. After the 2♣ response, opener can bid 2NT with a minimum-strength balanced hand suitable for notrump, or rebid 3♣ with a minimum-strength hand unsuitable for notrump. With extra strength, opener can bid a new suit to probe for the best contract.

♠ A 9 3
♥ 8 6
♦ A 4 2
♣ K Q J 8 6

Raise to 2♣. This would be an awkward hand playing standard methods, since there is no way to immediately show a forcing raise with club support. Responder would have to temporize with a response of 1♦, and continue to make forcing bids until game is reached. Playing inverted raises, responder starts by raising to 2♣ — showing the fit — and can then continue to game over opener's rebid.

The partnership must agree on whether this convention still applies if responder is a passed hand and whether it applies if the opponents interfere with an overcall or takeout double. The standard agreement is that it still applies when responder is a passed hand — although opener can pass since responder can no longer have a forcing raise — but raises revert to their natural meaning after an overcall or double. Some partnerships prefer to continue using the convention after a takeout double or a simple overcall.