

In news-sheet 172 I gave a hand where the sequence went 1NT - 2♥ - 2♠ - 4♦ and the 4♦ bid was apparently a splinter. This worked fine, but the problem is that if you use 4♦ (and 4♥) in this sequence as splinters then you can never splinter in clubs (4♣ is ace/key card ask).

Now everything is completely covered in the NT bidding book, but I'll outline it here. First of all, you have to get your 5-5 and 5-4 in the major suit responses to 1NT sorted out. With 5-4's it's best to use Stayman (and then Quest transfers, Smolen or bid the 5-carder after a 2♦ response) and with 5-5's you can use the sequence 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2♠ (as suggested in the NT book) or else another method listed there (such as direct jumps to 3♥/♠ over 1NT to show invitational/game forcing 5-5's).

Either way, you should have the bid of 3 of the 'other' major free in these auctions: -

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♠  
1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3♠

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♥  
1NT - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♥

So the way to be able to splinter in all three suits is to use this bid of 3 of the other major as an ambiguous splinter. Now let's assume that 4♣ is RKCB and that you agree the need for a general slam try bid (I recommend 4♦ for both Transfer and Stayman sequences - see the NT bidding book). Then our complete scheme is: -

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ -  
or after 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ -

and after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ -  
or after 1NT - 2♥ - 2♠ -

3♠ = ambiguous splinter  
4♣ = RKCB for ♥'s  
4♦ = slam try, no shortage

3♥ = ambiguous splinter  
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4♦ = slam try, no shortage

## Splinters after Stayman has found a fit or after a Jacoby Transfer

So we have decided upon 3 of the other major as an ambiguous splinter. Ambiguous splinters really do have an advantage over the direct splinter in that they lose nothing and do not give anything away to the defence if opener has an unsuitable hand for investigating slam. Opener can sign off in 4 of the major or ask about the shortage. The next bid up asks: -

So, after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♠,  
or 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3♠,

and after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♥,  
or 1NT - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♥,

3NT asks 4♣ = ♣ singleton/void  
4♦ = ♦ singleton/void  
4♥ = ♠ singleton/void

3♠ asks 3NT = ambiguous void  
4♣ = ♣ singleton  
4♦ = ♦ singleton  
4♥ = ♥ singleton

In the ♠ sequences, we have a couple of spare bids (3NT and 4♠). We will use 3NT to show an ambiguous void, with 4♣ as a relay to find out where. There is no room in the ♥ sequences for something similar so the shortage may be singleton or void.

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♥ - 3♠ - 3NT,  
or 1NT - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♥ - 3♠ - 3NT

4♣ asks 4♦ = ♦ void  
4♥ = ♥ void  
4♠ = ♣ void

There are numerous examples given in the relevant sections of the NT bidding book:

Section 2.9.1 for splinters after Stayman and section 3.1.5.1 for splinters after a transfer.