

5 3 Level Responses

So, at last, that's Stayman and Jacoby transfers completely finished with. Let's next consider all direct jumps to the 3 level after partner's 1NT opening. We start with the easy one, 3NT.

5.1 The Direct 3NT

Values for game but insufficient for a slam try. Since Stayman was not used, then obviously no 4 card major? We have been all through this before; I have strong views about when denying a 4 card major is allowed.

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	Partner opens a strong NT, what do you do?
♠ KQ3	♠ J963	♠ A107	Hand A is a simple 3NT – game values, no 4 card major.
♥ KJ4	♥ AQ3	♥ A1053	Hand B is a classic example of the rare occasion when a
♦ Q64	♦ KJ7	♦ J42	4 card major should be by-passed. Plenty of points, with
♣ J1094	♣ K102	♣ 1094	all outside suits well protected.
			Hand C is from section 2.1. It should look for the 4-4 ♥ fit
			and bid Stayman. If opener responds 2♦/♠ then bid 3NT.

We have seen that with a long minor suit you can transfer into the minor. But if there really is no other possible game than 3NT, then bid it directly. This gives less information away to the defence.

Example 1

West	East	West	East
♠ QJ75	♠ K93	1NT	3NT
♥ AQ5	♥ 97	pass	
♦ K9	♦ AQJ853		
♣ KJ32	♣ 64		

This sequence shows a weaker hand than the sequence 1NT - 2NT - 3♦ - 3NT which is slam invitational.

Summary of these 3NT bids: -

1NT - 3NT	Responder simply has values to play in 3NT
1NT - 2♠ - 2NT - 3NT	Responder needed help in the ♣ suit for 3NT
1NT - 2♠ - 3♣ - 3NT	Is a mild slam try
1NT - 2NT - 3♣ - 3NT	Responder needed help in the ♦ suit for 3NT
1NT - 2NT - 3♦ - 3NT	Is a mild slam try

There are various uses for these direct jumps over partner's 1NT opening, let's look at a few: -

- 1) 3♣ is Puppet Stayman, asking for 4 and 5 card majors.
- 2) 3♣/♦/♥/♠ are good 6 card suits and slam tries.
- 3) 3♣/♦/♥/♠ define various game forcing two-suiters.
- 4) 3♣/♦/♥/♠ show 5-5 minor suit and 5-5 major suit hands.
- 5) 3♣/♦/♥/♠ are all used as a substitute for Minor Suit Stayman.
- 6) 3♣/♦ are 6 card suits, game (3NT) invitational.
- 7) 3♥/♠ show a broken suit (6 or 7 cards) with slam interest.
- 8) 3♣/♦/♥/♠ are game forcing splinters, showing a singleton/void.

All of the above are in common use, so let's have a look at them all and choose one: -

1) 3♣ is Puppet Stayman

We will sometimes open 1NT with a hand containing a 5 card major. And sometimes partner will need to know this, especially if he has a game going hand containing a small doubleton and 3 card major support. Puppet Stayman is a useful convention over an opening 2NT, a 3♣ bid over the 2NT opening locates both 4 card and 5 card major suits in the 2NT opener's hand. This same 3♣ bid can be used over a 1NT opening; but our SARS system works fine (better) and so we can allocate another meaning to this 3♣ bid.

2) 3♣/♦/♥/♠ are 6 card suits and slam tries.

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	
♠ KQJ876	♠ 876	♠ K7	bids. All of these hands are worth an attempt at slam and bidding the suit at the three level is a way to handle these strong hands. However, they can all be satisfactorily dealt with using transfers with the advantage that the NT opener will usually be declarer. So we can find another use for the direct 3 level bids.
♥ K64	♥ AKQJ93	♥ A93	
♦ K64	♦ 2	♦ AKQJ76	
♣ 5	♣ K64	♣ 64	

3) 3♣/♦/♥/♠ define various game forcing two-suiters.

There are numerous variations here, but we can cover all the permutations with our transfer and Quest transfer sequences etc. So we'll use these 3 level jumps for another purpose.

4) 3♣/♦/♥/♠ show 5-5 minor suit and 5-5 major suit hands.

The scheme here is –

- 3♣ = 5-5 in the minors, weak.
- 3♦ = 5-5 in the minors, strong.
- 3♥ = 5-5 in the majors, weak. * note, some play this 3♥ bid as 5-5 invitational
- 3♠ = 5-5 in the majors, strong.

Now this scheme is gaining in popularity, so it's about time that somebody put an end to the virus! Despite the fact that it is very popular, I think that it's all nonsense. Let's go through all four of the bids one at a time and compare them with our system: -

a. 3♣ = 5-5 in the minors, weak.

- Hand F Now 3♣ is a weak bid which opener is expected to either pass or correct. But opener may have no more than a 3 card minor and you are up at the 3 level, why not simply pass 1NT?
- ♠ 87 3 of a minor may work out best, but it is squandering an otherwise useful bid.
 - ♥ 2
 - ♦ Q8752 Also, in these days of aggressive bidding, this hand would probably not get a chance to say anything as the opponents will have bid.
 - ♣ K8752

b. 3♦ = 5-5 in the minors, strong.

- Hand G We met this hand back in section 4.3.1 when the bidding started 1NT - 2♠ - 2NT - 3♦. Now we are at the same level here but things are not the same. With our transfer sequence opener had the opportunity to super-accept or not and so in our sequence responder knows that opener holds 3 ♣'s to an honour. Also, our transfer sequences cater for 6-5 and 5-6 in the minors and this scheme cannot do that adequately. And, of course, what about 6-4 and 4-6's?
- ♠ A
 - ♥ A4
 - ♦ KJ872
 - ♣ AQJ76

c. 3♥ = 5-5 in the majors, weak.

- Hand H We met this hand when we had that little detour to discuss Crawling Stayman. Our approach is to bid Stayman and if partner bids 2♦ then take a guess. We are at the two level but it may be a 5-2 fit.
- ♠ Q8642
 - ♥ Q8642 With this direct 3♥ method you will usually locate a 5-3 fit but you are one level higher. I prefer our simple method because: -
 - ♦ 76
 - ♣ 3
- 1- If there is a 5-4 fit opener plays it and we are one level lower.
 - 2- ½ the time we will locate the 5-3 fit and be at a lower level.
 - 3- so less than ½ the time this method locates a 5-3 fit which we miss, but they are one level higher.
 - 4- does your partner ever open 1NT with 2245 or 2254 shape?

* note playing 3♥ as 5-5 invitational is another approach, but our sequence 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 2NT - 3♦/♥ is obviously superior as opener has more information about responder's shape.

d. 3♠ = 5-5 in the majors, strong.

Hand J	We met Hand J back in section 3.1.4 and the sequence started 1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 2NT - ? At the ? stage responder has shown a 5-5 major suited hand and his next bid give further definition (strength, shape etc.).
♠ KQJ75	
♥ KQ1094	Our scheme really is light years ahead of this uncouth 3♠ jump. We are a whole bidding level lower and also accommodate invitational as well as game forcing hands.
♦ A64	
♣ -	

They may be popular, but using these jumps to show a few 5-5 shapes really sucks.

5) 3♣/♦/♥/♠ are all used as a substitute for Minor Suit Stayman.

Players who play minor suit transfers and have not yet heard of SARS need a method to find minor suit fits after partner's 1NT opening. One such method is: -

3♣ = 5 ♣'s, 4 ♦'s
 3♦ = 4 ♣'s, 5 ♦'s
 3♥ = 5-5, singleton or void ♥
 3♠ = 5-5, singleton or void ♠

All fairly sensible but somewhat limited. Utilising four bids for the infrequent situations where responder has 9 or 10 cards in the minors and game going values is a bit extravagant. Also, there seems to be no mention of responding hands that are 4-4 in the minors or 5-5's without a void. Anyway, we have SARS for 4-4, 5-4 and 4-5's and we transfer (1NT - 2♠ - 2NT/3♣ - 3♦) with 5-5's. These are clearly superior as we are at a lower level and have already exchanged useful information.

6) 3♣/♦ are 6 card suits, game (3NT) invitational.

Hand D	Hand E	With this option, the jump to 3♣/♦ shows a good suit and nothing much outside. The suit should be six or seven card and headed by two top honours (but AK is too good). Opener should then bid 3NT with a doubleton A or K or with three small with all outside suits covered. Obviously a sound concept. However, you can show many of these hand types by transferring to the minor and opener is usually declarer.
♠ 76	♠ 76	
♥ 64	♥ 64	
♦ 653	♦ KQJ7653	
♣ AQJ876	♣ 95	

But consider these two example hands. If opener has ♣Kx opposite Hand D or ♦Ax opposite Hand E then 3NT will make and transferring will miss the game. So a useful treatment and definitely worth considering.

Using this treatment the 3♥/♠ bids are still spare and an excellent scheme for these is: -

7) 3♥/♠ show a broken suit (6 or 7 cards) with slam interest.

Hand H	Hand J	You could bid both of these hands by starting with a transfer. However, being able to indicate that you have a very good hand but with a broken suit may well be beneficial. Opener will be warned off slamming if he does not have an honour in the suit. Obviously a very sensible option for 3♥ and 3♠, so let's describe it in a little more detail.
♠ AJ8742	♠ 4	
♥ A2	♥ KJ87642	
♦ KJ10	♦ K87	
♣ 95	♣ A7	

First of all, what are opener's options? With a minimal hand or with a good hand but lacking a trump honour, opener should simply sign off in 4 of the major. With a small doubleton in the suit then opener may elect to bid 3NT - responder will convert to 4 of the major with a 7 card suit (and maybe with a 6-carder). With slam potential and a high trump, opener should cue bid.

Example 7.1

West	East	West	East	(1) broken suit
♠ 963	♠ AJ8742	1NT	3♠ (1)	
♥ KQJ8	♥ A2	4♠	pass	
♦ AQ65	♦ KJ10			
♣ KJ	♣ 95			

Example 7.1 demonstrates the main advantage of this method. West has the knowledge of East's broken suit and so does not even have to investigate slam. If East had transferred then West may well have got too high (5♠ is not secure) in search of slam.

But one more important point is that the wrong hand is declarer! Wouldn't it be nice to be able to stop in 4♠ with West as declarer? We come back to this example in section 5.3.

Example 7.2

West	East	West	East	(1) broken suit
♠ 96	♠ AJ8742	1NT	3♠ (1)	
♥ KQJ8	♥ A2	3NT	pass	
♦ AQ65	♦ KJ10			
♣ KJ6	♣ 95			

In example 7.2 West has no fit and so 3NT will be reached however you bid it. However, East may well elect to pull it to 4♠, not really a problem except that the wrong hand is declarer.

Example 7.3

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ5	♠ AJ8742	1NT	3♠ (1)	(1) broken suit
♥ K763	♥ A2	4♣ (2)	etc to 6♠	(2) cue bid
♦ Q965	♦ KJ10			
♣ AQ	♣ 95			

A decent slam, but wouldn't it be a much better one if played by West?

So, quite a useful treatment for these two jumps. The knowledge of the broken suit often enables us to stay lower when we might otherwise get too high, but it's the wrong hand that ends up as declarer. We'll come back to this (and see the examples again) in section 5.3.

Let's look at another very sensible option for these 3♣/♦/♥/♠ bids: -

8) 3♣/♦/♥/♠ are game forcing splinters, showing a singleton/void

How do you bid a 4441 (any order) type hand with game going values after partner has opened 1NT? You could try Stayman but if there is no major suit fit, then 5 or 6 of a minor might be on. But indicating your shortage to opener will often avoid silly 3NT contracts.

Having direct splinters to the 3 level is also a very good option, so let's look into it a little deeper: -

Hand A	Hand B	Partner opens a strong NT. Under normal methods with Hand A you try Stayman and if there is no fit then there really is no option but to punt 3NT. It's a shame if you lose the first 5
♠ AQ98	♠ KJ3	♥ tricks. You could try SARS but how do you establish if opener ♦
♥ 2	♥ 10874	has sufficient ♥ stops so that 3NT is better than 5 of a minor?
K853	♦ AQJ85	And how about Hand B? You could transfer into ♦'s and then bid 3♥,
♣ Q1063	♣ 4	but that leaves ♠'s out of the equation and 4♠ may just be the only makeable game. So let's see how splinters can work.

What does opener do after partner has splintered? The bid is game forcing, so the cheapest bid in a suit sets trumps. 3NT shows that the shortage is well stopped.

And what bid is used by responder to show this splinter suit? Traditionally one simply bids the short suit, and that is a perfectly workable method. But bidding the suit below the shortage (3♣ with short ♠'s) has its advantages: -

- 1- The next player will not be able to double the splinter bid to show a strong holding in that suit.
- 2- It frees the bid of the short suit by opener for further exploration.

But there are disadvantages with using the suit below: -

- 1- Partner may forget?
- 2- Responder is more likely to become declarer.
- 3- You do not actually save on bidding space. With the shortage in ♠'s, ♥'s or ♣'s you have one extra step, but with a ♣ shortage you have to bid 3♠ and so lose 3 steps. This really is quite important, as with a ♣ shortage it's quite likely that a major suit will be trumps and it is not so easy now for opener to make a distinction between slam interest or not when he likes ♥'s or ♠'s.

If you prefer to use the 'suit below' then fine, and you will need to define what a bid in the short suit by opener means. Now I am not going to say which scheme is best – because we will be using neither! But we will be using these direct splinters (in a slightly more devious form) and so I'll just give a few examples to demonstrate how useful they can be: -

Example 8.1

West	East	West	East	
♠ AQ105	♠ KJ3	1NT	3♣ (1)	(1) ♣ shortage
♥ AJ5	♥ 10874	4♠ (2)	pass	(2) ♠'s but min
♦ K974	♦ AQJ85			
♣ Q3	♣ 4			

3NT is silly and 5♦ may lose 3 tricks. 4♠ is an excellent contract that is unlikely to be reached by other methods.

Example 8.2 Often you can avoid silly 3NT contracts by playing in a minor: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ5	♠ A642	1NT	3♥ (1)	(1) ♥ shortage
♥ Q76	♥ 2	4♦	5♦	
♦ AQ106	♦ K853	pass		
♣ KJ2	♣ Q1063			

Example 8.3 Wouldn't it be great to get to 6♠ on these cards: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ AJ108	♠ KQ7	1NT	3♥ (1)	(1) ♥ shortage
♥ Q976	♥ 2	3♠ (2)	4♦ (3)	(2) sets trumps
♦ KJ	♦ AQ976	etc to 6♠		(3) cue bid
♣ AJ4	♣ KQ98			

Example 8.4 Sometimes East may have a void: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ6	♠ AJ98	1NT	3♥ (1)	(1) short ♥'s
♥ J62	♥ -	4♦ (2)	? (3)	(2) ♦'s are trumps
♦ AQ106	♦ KJ853	etc to 6♦		
♣ KJ2	♣ Q876			

You have to decide which bid is RKCB in these situations. In example 8.4, 4♥ at (3) would be the RKCB bid for ♦'s, but maybe we should allow responder to be able to cue bid the shortage suit to show a void? We'll solve this problem when we move onto our version of direct splinters in section 5.4.

So everything is not that straightforward and there is the odd grey area. Another problem is that the 3♠ splinter is rather high. Suppose that East has ♠ shortage and West wants to investigate a ♥ slam: -

Example 8.5

West	East	West	East	(1) ♠ shortage
♠ Q976	♠ 2	1NT	3♠ (1)	
♥ AJ108	♥ KQ7	? (2)		
♦ KJ	♦ AQ976			
♣ AJ4	♣ KQ98			

West wants to try for 6♥, but how does he continue at (2)? 3NT is to play; 4♣/♦ set the trump suit; 4♥ is to play; and 4NT is, well, above 4♠ if responder is not interested in a ♠ slam!

So we cannot really use 3♠ for ♠ shortage, I will leave this to section 5.4 where we cover our method of playing these splinters.

So that's it and we have covered all of the options for these 3♣/♦/♥/♠ jumps that are in common use. It's time to pick one.

As far as I'm concerned it's between option 6 combined with option 7 or option 8. Even in this book we can't have everything and since we have to choose one....

Rewind, rewind.

What am I saying? Perhaps we can't have everything, but we can at least try to have the broken suit jumps and also splinters. And while we are at it, can't we arrange for these broken suit jumps to be played by declarer? And perhaps sort out the problems with looking for a major suit slam and also the void problem with the splinters?

Of course we can

5.3 Broken Suit Transfers (BST)

Now I believe that this showing of the broken ♥/♠ suit with slam interest is a good idea, the problem was that the wrong hand will always end up being declarer. Now you could adopt the Smolen philosophy but I guess you know what I think of that! No, the answer is that 1NT - 3♦/♥ have to be transfers indicating the broken suit. Excellent. But that then leaves just 3♣ and 3♠ for the splinters, but we will solve that minor irritation in the next section. So we have: -

1NT - 3♦ = transfer to ♥'s, indicating a broken ♥ suit and slam interest.
 1NT - 3♥ = transfer to ♠'s, indicating a broken ♠ suit and slam interest.

Next we have to define the subsequent bids. West has two options. If he prefers 3NT then he bids it but responder will often pull this – especially with a 7 card suit. Note that if responder does pull it he bids 4♦/♥ – a re-transfer.

If opener prefers the major suit (either game or slam) it really is best if he always completes the transfer (that's the main point, isn't it?) or else bid game with no slam interest. After a transfer completion responder will cue bid if possible (else 3NT) and opener will then proceed in investigating slam (cue bid or RKCB).

To start with, let's see how it works with the examples from section 5.2.(7).

Example 1 (7.1)

West	East	West	East		
♠ 963	♠ AJ8742	1NT	3♥ (1)	(1) BST	
♥ KQJ8	♥ A2	4♠ (2)	pass	(2) no slam interest	
♦ AQ65	♦ KJ10				
♣ KJ	♣ 95				

So this time it's the same contract but played by the correct hand.

Example 2 (7.2)

West	East	West	East		
♠ 96	♠ AJ8742	1NT	3♥ (1)	(1) broken suit	
♥ KQJ8	♥ A2	3NT	pass (2)		
♦ AQ65	♦ KJ10				
♣ KJ6	♣ 95				

Same contract as before. But it's quite likely that East will choose to pull it to 4♠ at (2) (via a 4♥ re-transfer) and BST is then far superior as West is declarer.

Example 3 (7.3)

West	East	West	East		
♠ KQ5	♠ AJ8742	1NT	3♥	(1)	(1) BST
♥ K763	♥ A2	3♠	4♥	(2)	(2) cue bid
♦ Q965	♦ KJ10	5♣ (3)	5♦	(4)	(3) cue bid
♣ AQ	♣ 95	6♠	pass		(4) cue bid

West has weak ♦'s and does not want to bid RKCB at (3) – very wise, swap East's minors and there is no slam. East's cue bid at (4) is 2nd round control.

The same contract as before, but this time it's virtually 100% as West is declarer.

Example 4

If East has no ace to cue then he bids 3NT: -

West	East	West	East		
♠ Q65	♠ KJ8742	1NT	3♥	(1)	(1) BST
♥ AJ6	♥ KQ	3♠	3NT	(2)	(2) no ace to cue
♦ A962	♦ KQJ	4♠ (3)	pass		
♣ KQ7	♣ 52				

West is max with good trumps, but with no ♣A and a probable ♠ loser, discretion is the better part of valour at (3).

Example 5

But if East shows the ♣A then it's worth a shot: -

West	East	West	East		
♠ Q95	♠ KJ8742	1NT	3♥	(1)	(1) BST
♥ AJ6	♥ KQ	3♠	4♣	(2)	(2) cue bid
♦ A962	♦ Q53	4♦ (2)	4NT	(3)	(3) RKCB
♣ KQ7	♣ A2	etc to 6♠			

A very respectable slam, even if the ♦K is wrong and you get a ♦ lead.

Now two examples to emphasise the main points of playing BST – establishing the broken suit and ensuring that opener is declarer: -

Example 6

West	East	West	East
♠ 653	♠ AJ8742	1NT	3♥ (1) (1) BST
♥ KQ98	♥ A2	4♠	pass
♦ AQ62	♦ KJ10		
♣ AJ	♣ Q2		

With probably two trump losers, West does not even try for slam. Note that 4♠ by West is a better contract than 4♠ by East,

Example 7

West	East	West	East
♠ Q53	♠ AJ8742	1NT	3♥ (1) (1) BST
♥ K983	♥ A2	3♠	4♥ (2) (2) cue bid
♦ AQ62	♦ KJ10	4NT (3)	etc to 6♠ (3) RKCB
♣ AJ	♣ Q2		

West has the same strength hand, but this time the ♠ Q is so much better than the ♥ Q. 6♠ is a good contract, especially when played by West.

And as I mentioned earlier, East should re-transfer over 3NT if he wants (partner) to play in the suit contract: -

Example 8

West	East	West	East
♠ 96	♠ AJ87542	1NT	3♥ (1) (1) BST
♥ KJ83	♥ A2	3NT	4♥ (2) (2) re-transfer
♦ AQ62	♦ KJ10	4♠	pass (3) RKCB
♣ AQ3	♣ 2		

There's no doubt about it, BST is far superior to a natural jump to 3♥/♠, n'est pas? But then there are just 3♣ and 3♠ left for the direct splinters. Can we cope? What a silly question

5.4 Direct Ambiguous Splinters

Hand A	Hand B	
♠ A642	♠ AQ3	So with this type of hand, playable in 3 suits, we want to splinter. The bid is game forcing but not necessarily slam seeking. We allow a (good) 3 card major but minor suits would normally be at least 4 cards long.
♥ 2	♥ 10874	
♦ K853	♦ AJ985	
♣ Q1063	♣ 4	

We have decided to use 1NT - 3♦/♥ as transfers indicating the broken suit. Excellent. But that then leaves just 3♣ and 3♠ for the splinters. No problem: -

1NT - 3♣	=	either ♠, ♣ or ♦ shortage, 3♦ by opener asks and	3♥	=	♠ shortage
			3♠	=	♣ shortage
			3NT	=	♦ shortage
1NT - 3♠	=	♥ shortage			

I indicated earlier that we cannot use 3♠ as ♠ shortage; so with our limited options we have to use 3♥ as this is the only sequence with enough bids. You could then actually choose whichever sequences you like to show the other three shortages (they all have the same number of free bids), this is as good as any. But there is not that much space and we have to be careful, especially where we need to distinguish between slam seeking and just game going hands. Anyway, it is all covered shortly.

Now these splinter bids are rather high and so we have to set a few ground rules. First, let's consider the situation where opener selects a minor suit as trumps. So he bids 4 of the minor but what does responder then do? If the 4♣/♦ did not indicate whether opener had slam interest or not then responder is in a spot as it's now decision time (the next bid is the Kickback suit).

There is not enough bidding space for everybody to investigate everything and so it is best for responder to restrict the use of splinters to just game going hands or slam interest hands. Slam forcing hands will have to find another route unless they can cope with opener 'signing off' in 5 of a minor. So when opener wants to play in a minor, 4♣/♦ expresses slam interest but 5♣/♦ are sign offs. After opener bids 4♣ or 4♦ (expressing slam interest) then responder will sign off in 5♣/♦ with no slam ambitions. Otherwise the next free bid is the Kickback suit and so responder usually uses this as RKCB.

So with a minor suit as trumps there is always enough bidding space, but with a major suit it's different. Opener cannot simply bid 4♥/♠ to set trumps as responder does not know if opener has slam interest or not. So 4♥/♠ need to be sign off and with slam interest in a major suit opener has to find another bid. (Fortunately) there is just enough room to do this in every scenario and it is different depending upon what the shortage suit is.

So now we'll cover all of the shortages in detail, the example numbers in brackets are where we met them before in section 5.2(8).

1- Short ♥'s (1NT - 3♠)

After 1NT - 3♠, showing ♥ shortage, opener's responses are: -

- 3NT = to play
- 4♣ = ♣'s are trumps, slam interest
- 4♦ = ♦'s are trumps, slam interest
- 4♥ = ♠'s are trumps, slam interest
- 4♠ = ♠'s are trumps, no slam interest
- 5♣ = ♣'s are trumps, no slam interest
- 5♦ = ♦'s are trumps, no slam interest

Everything is pretty straightforward here except that 4♥ shows ♠ slam interest. Responder's reply to this 4♥ bid is: -

- After 1NT - 3♠ - 4♥, 4♠ = no slam interest
 - 4NT = RKCB for ♠'s
 - 5♣ = ERKCB for ♠'s, ♥ void
-

Example 1 (8.2) 3NT would be a dodgy contract here: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ5	♠ A642	1NT	3♠ (1)	(1) ♥ shortage
♥ Q76	♥ 2	4♦ (2)	5♦	(2) ♦'s are trumps, slam interest
♦ AQ106	♦ K853	pass		
♣ KJ2	♣ Q1063			

Example 2 (8.3) And 6♠ is sure to get an excellent score on this board: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ AJ108	♠ KQ7	1NT	3♠ (1)	(1) ♥ shortage
♥ Q976	♥ 2	4♥ (2)	4NT (3)	(2) ♠'s are trumps, slam interest
♦ KJ	♦ AQ976	etc to 6♠		(3) RKCB for ♠'s
♣ AJ4	♣ KQ98			

Example 3 With no slam interest, responder signs off: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ AJ108	♠ KQ7	1NT	3♠ (1)	(1) ♥ shortage
♥ Q976	♥ 2	4♥ (2)	4♠ (3)	(2) ♠'s are trumps, slam interest
♦ KJ	♦ Q9764	pass		(3) no slam interest
♣ AJ4	♣ KQ98			

But there is sometimes a slight problem when responder is looking for a slam with a void. How does he show this? There are various options but the simplest is that responder uses the bid above the Kickback bid as Exclusion RKCB, where the exclusion (void) suit is obviously the shortage already shown.:-

Example 4 (8.4)

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ6	♠ AJ98	1NT	3♠ (1)	(1) ♥ shortage
♥ J62	♥ -	4♦ (2)	4♠ (3)	(2) ♦'s are trumps, slam interest
♦ AQ106	♦ KJ853	5♣ (4)	etc to 6♦	(3) ERKCB for ♦'s, ♥ void
♣ KJ2	♣ Q876			(4) 1 key card outside ♥'s

Here 4♥ at (3) would have been RKCB and so 4♠ is ERKCB.

Example 5

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQJ6	♠ AJ98	1NT	3♠ (1)	(1) ♥ shortage
♥ J62	♥ -	4♥ (2)	5♣ (3)	(2) ♠'s are trumps, slam interest
♦ AQ6	♦ KJ853	5NT (4)	6♠	(3) ERKCB for ♠'s, ♥ void
♣ KJ2	♣ Q876	pass		(4) 2 key cards outside ♥'s + ♠Q

Example 6 Using Exclusion RKCB is sometimes absolutely necessary:-

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQJ6	♠ A985	1NT	3♠ (1)	(1) ♥ shortage
♥ AJ2	♥ -	4♥ (2)	5♣ (3)	(2) ♠'s are trumps, slam interest
♦ Q62	♦ KJ853	5♥ (4)	5♠	(3) ERKCB for ♠'s, ♥ void
♣ KJ2	♣ Q876	pass		(4) 1 key card outside ♥'s

Now I did say that responder's minor suits should be 4 or 5 card, but a good 3 card suit is acceptable if responder has extra values:-

Example 7

West	East	West	East	
♠ AQ2	♠ KJ97	1NT	3♠ (1)	(1) ♥ shortage
♥ Q976	♥ 2	4♦ (2)	4♥ (3)	(2) ♦'s are trumps, slam interest
♦ KJ87	♦ AQ10	etc to 6♦		(3) RKCB for ♦'s
♣ A4	♣ KQ852			

2- Short ♠'s (1NT - 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♥)

After 1NT - 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♥, showing ♠ shortage, opener's responses are: -

- 3♠ = ♥'s are trumps, slam interest
- 3NT = to play
- 4♣ = ♣'s are trumps, slam interest
- 4♦ = ♦'s are trumps, slam interest
- 4♥ = ♥'s are trumps, no slam interest
- 5♣ = ♣'s are trumps, no slam interest
- 5♦ = ♦'s are trumps, no slam interest

Here we use the 3♠ bid to show ♥ slam interest, responder's next bids are: -

- After 1NT - 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♥ - 3♠,
- 4♥ = no slam interest
 - 4♠ = RKCB for ♥'s
 - 4NT = ERKCB for ♥'s (void ♠)

Example 8 (8.5)

West	East	West	East	(1) ambiguous splinter
				(2) where?
♠ Q976	♠ 2	1NT	3♣ (1)	(3) ♠ shortage
♥ AJ108	♥ KQ7	3♦ (2)	3♥ (3)	(4) ♥'s are trumps, slam interest
♦ KJ	♦ AQ976	3♠ (4)	4♠ (5)	(5) RKCB for ♥'s
♣ AJ4	♣ KQ98	etc to 6♥		

Example 9

And the bid above Kickback is still ERKCB: -

West	East	West	East	(1) ambiguous splinter
				(2) where?
♠ Q976	♠ -	1NT	3♣ (1)	(3) ♠ shortage
♥ AJ108	♥ KQ72	3♦ (2)	3♥ (3)	(4) ♥'s are trumps, slam interest
♦ KJ	♦ Q9762	3♠ (4)	4NT (5)	(5) ERKCB for ♥'s (void ♠)
♣ AJ4	♣ KQ98	etc to 6♥		

3- Short ♣'s (1NT - 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♠)

We are a little short of bids here as we have to cope with either major being trumps, so we have to use the bid of the shortage suit to show slam interest in an unspecified major: -

After 1NT - 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♠, showing ♣ shortage, opener's responses are: -

- 3NT = to play
- 4♣ = slam interest in either ♥'s or ♠'s
- 4♦ = ♦'s are trumps, slam interest
- 4♥ = ♥'s are trumps, no slam interest
- 4♠ = ♠'s are trumps, no slam interest
- 5♦ = ♦'s are trumps, no slam interest

After the 4♣ bid, it's up to responder to say whether he too has slam interest in a major. So after 1NT - 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♠ - 4♣ responder's responses are: -

- 4♦ = slam interest
- 4♥ = no slam interest (pass or correct)
- 4♠ = Exclusion Blackwood (♣ void)

And after 1NT - 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♠ - 4♣ - 4♦ showing slam interest, opener then bids: -

- 4♠ = RKCB for ♥'s
- 4NT = RKCB for ♠'s.

Example 10 (8.1)

West	East	West	East	
♠ AQ105	♠ KJ3	1NT	3♣ (1)	(1) ambiguous splinter
♥ AJ5	♥ 10874	3♦ (2)	3♠ (3)	(2) where?
♦ K974	♦ AQJ85	4♠	pass	(3) ♣ shortage
♣ Q3	♣ 4			

Same contract as before. 3NT is silly and 5♦ may lose 3 tricks. 4♠ is an excellent contract that is unlikely to be reached by other methods.

Example 11

♠ AQ105	♠ KJ3	1NT	3♣ (1)	(1) ambiguous splinter
♥ AK5	♥ 10874	3♦ (2)	3♠ (3)	(2) where?
♦ K97	♦ AQJ85	4♣ (4)	4♦ (5)	(3) ♣ shortage
♣ 973	♣ 4	4NT (6)	etc to 6♠	(4) slam interest in a major (5) I'm listening (6) RKCB for ♠'s

With no slam interest, responder bids 4♥, pass or correct: -

Example 12

♠ AQ105	♠ KJ3	1NT	3♣ (1)	(1) ambiguous splinter
♥ AK5	♥ 10874	3♦ (2)	3♠ (3)	(2) where?
♦ K97	♦ AJ852	4♣ (4)	4♥ (5)	(3) ♣ shortage
♣ 973	♣ 4	4♠	pass	(4) slam interest in a major
				(5) no slam interest, pass or correct

So after opener shows slam interest in a major with 4♣, if responder also has slam interest he allows opener to fix the trump suit with RKCB next go. But what if responder has a void? Now there are schemes to show a void after partner has used Blackwood, but they are not 100% foolproof. The best solution is for responder to use Exclusion Blackwood.

Now responder does not know which major is trumps and so we cannot use ERKCB. Thus the options are EDRKCB (both majors) or simple Exclusion Blackwood (with no trump suit agreed); I guess that you could even dream up Exclusion Triple RKCB? Let's use the simple Exclusion Blackwood variation: -

Example 13

♠ AQ105	♠ KJ73	1NT	3♣ (1)	(1) ambiguous splinter
♥ AKJ	♥ 10874	3♦ (2)	3♠ (3)	(2) where?
♦ Q97	♦ AJ852	4♣ (4)	4♠ (5)	(3) ♣ shortage
♣ 973	♣ -	5♦ (6)	etc (7)	(4) slam interest in a major
				(5) Exclusion Blackwood
				(6) 2 aces outside ♣'s

Responder checks for kings (via whatever scheme you use) and then wants to be in a small slam. So he bids 6♥ at (7) which is pass or correct. Opener obviously corrects to 6♠.

If opener sets ♦'s as trumps (with 4♦ so slam interest) and responder has a ♣ void then it's easier and we obviously use ERKCB, the bid above Kickback: -

Example 14

♠ Q105	♠ KJ73	1NT	3♣ (1)	(1) ambiguous splinter
♥ AKJ	♥ 10874	3♦ (2)	3♠ (3)	(2) where?
♦ KQ97	♦ AJ852	4♦ (4)	4♠ (5)	(3) ♣ shortage
♣ 973	♣ -	etc to 6♦		(4) ♦'s are trumps, slam interest
				(5) ERKCB for ♦'s (♣ void)

4♥ at (5) would be RKCB for ♦'s (singleton ♣).

4- Short \diamond 's (1NT - 3 \clubsuit - 3 \diamond - 3NT)

Here we have the same lack of bids to show slam interest in a major. It's much the same as with \clubsuit shortage but we still need 4 \clubsuit to show the (ambiguous) major suit slam interest. So, unfortunately, we have to use 4 \diamond to show \clubsuit 's – that's usually no problem as we have just about enough room (just one above the 100% safe Kickback threshold).

After 1NT - 3 \clubsuit - 3 \diamond - 3NT, showing \clubsuit shortage, opener's responses are: -

- pass = to play
- 4 \clubsuit = slam interest in either \heartsuit 's or \spadesuit 's
- 4 \diamond = \clubsuit 's are trumps, slam interest
- 4 \heartsuit = \heartsuit 's are trumps, no slam interest
- 4 \spadesuit = \spadesuit 's are trumps, no slam interest
- 5 \clubsuit = \clubsuit 's are trumps, no slam interest

After the 4 \clubsuit bid it's up to responder to say whether he too has slam interest.

So after 1NT - 3 \clubsuit - 3 \diamond - 3 \spadesuit - 4 \clubsuit responder's responses are: -

- 4 \diamond = slam interest
- 4 \heartsuit = no slam interest (pass or correct)
- 4 \spadesuit = Exclusion Blackwood (\diamond void)

And after 1NT - 3 \clubsuit - 3 \diamond - 3 \spadesuit - 4 \clubsuit - 4 \diamond , opener's responses are: -

- 4 \spadesuit = RKCB for \heartsuit 's
- 4NT = RKCB for \spadesuit 's.

Example 15

West	East	West	East	(1) ambiguous splinter
				(2) where?
\spadesuit AQ	\spadesuit KJ97	1NT	3 \clubsuit (1)	(3) \diamond shortage
\heartsuit AJ108	\heartsuit KQ76	3 \diamond (2)	3NT (3)	(4) slam interest in a major
\diamond Q976	\diamond 2	4 \clubsuit (4)	4 \diamond (5)	(5) I'm also interested
\clubsuit K94	\clubsuit AQJ8	4 \spadesuit (6)	etc to 6 \heartsuit	(6) agrees \heartsuit 's, RKCB

Example 16

West	East	West	East	(1) ambiguous splinter
				(2) where?
\spadesuit AQ	\spadesuit KJ97	1NT	3 \clubsuit (1)	(3) \diamond shortage
\heartsuit K94	\heartsuit AQJ8	3 \diamond (2)	3NT (3)	(4) \clubsuit 's are trumps
\diamond Q976	\diamond 2	4 \diamond (4)	4 \heartsuit (5)	(5) agrees \clubsuit 's, RKCB
\clubsuit AJ108	\clubsuit KQ76	etc to 6 \clubsuit		

5- Opener likes NT

Now there's one thing that we have not covered, opener may have ample cover in the short suit and wish to play in 3NT. No problem: -

Example 17

West	East	West	East	
♠ K5	♠ A763	1NT	3♠ (1)	(1) ♥ shortage
♥ AQJ9	♥ 2	3NT (2)	pass	(2) I have good ♥'s
♦ AQ86	♦ K1053			
♣ J104	♣ Q632			

Example 18

West	East	West	East	
♠ J105	♠ AQ3	1NT	3♣ (1)	(1) ambiguous splinter
♥ AJ5	♥ 10874	3♦ (2)	3♠ (3)	(2) where?
♦ AJ	♦ KQ985	3NT (4)	pass	(3) ♣ shortage
♣ KJ1095	♣ 4			(4) I have good ♥'s

And there is just one other (rather rare) possibility with these ambiguous (♠/♣/♦ shortage) splinters – opener may simply bid 3NT without asking about shortage: -

Example 19

West	East	West	East	(1) ambiguous splinter
♠ AQJ	♠ K976	1NT	3♣ (1)	
♥ 83	♥ AQ76	3NT (2)	pass	
♦ KJ105	♦ Q982			
♣ KJ105	♣ 2			

West knows that East's shortage is not ♥'s. He is not interested in ♠'s and does not really want to play in a minor suit game – so he simply bids 3NT!

*** End of Chapter 5 ***