



What are Inverted Minor Raises?

After partner opens the bidding with one of a minor, inverted minor raises reverse the meaning of a single raise and a jump raise.

In standard Acol (and other standard systems), a single raise – 1♣-2♣ or 1♦-2♦ is weaker than a jump raise – 1♣-3♣ or 1♦-3♦. In standard methods, the single raise shows about 6-9 points and the jump limit raise about 10-12 points. Playing Inverted Minor raises, the single raise is stronger than a jump raise. The single raise is forcing for one round while the jump raise is more pre-emptive in nature.

| Hand 1 | Hand 2 |
|------------|------------|
| ♠ 7 4 | ♠ 7 4 |
| ♥ 8 3 2 | ♥ A 8 2 |
| ♦ K 10 4 2 | ♦ K 10 4 2 |
| ♣ K J 8 2 | ♣ K J 8 2 |

In standard methods, Hand 1 gives a single raise while Hand 2 gives a jump raise. Playing inverted minors, it is the other way round: Hand 1 gives a jump raise and Hand 2 gives a single raise.

In Acol, four-card support is adequate for the jump raises because the opening bid is natural and (playing a style of preferring to open the major on 4432 hands too strong for 1NT) will often include five cards in the minor.

If you play 'better minor', when the opening minor does not promise a four-card suit, then you need five-card support for the jump raise; four-card support is still adequate for the forcing single raise.

What are the advantages in playing the single raise as the stronger hand?

First, when responder has a good hand, the single raise keeps the bidding lower and gives more space for exploring the best contract. Secondly, when responder has a weak hand, the deal is quite likely to belong to the opponents (who have the major suits); the weak jump raise means that they have to enter the auction at the three level.

The other big advantage to inverted raises is that they offer a convenient way to handle some otherwise unbiddable hands. Because the inverted single raise is forcing, responder can make the bid not just on game invitational hands but on game forcing hands as well.

The range for the inverted single raise is not 10-12 but rather 10+.

| Hand 3 |
|-------------|
| ♠ K Q 5 |
| ♥ 9 2 |
| ♦ A K J 7 3 |
| ♣ J 4 3 |

Playing standard methods, what would you respond to a 1♦ opening? There is no good answer, is there? Following the principle of preferring to lie about a minor rather than a major, you would probably respond 2♣ – but this is hardly descriptive. Playing inverted raises, you have an easy raise of 1♦-2♦, showing a decent hand with diamond support, with the possibility of showing your extra strength later.

Are there any downsides to playing inverted raises?

If opener has a strong hand and responder is weak, you have less room to explore. Opener cannot make an invitational 2NT rebid when the bidding is already at the three level, following responder's weak jump raise. With a balanced hand, I suggest you bid on with 18-19 points but not with 17 or fewer. Occasionally you will miss game if responder is maximum for the weak jump raise. If you are playing a strong 1NT opening, this is less of an issue because balanced 15-17 hands would have opened 1NT in the first place.

What does opener rebid after the inverted single raise?

Assuming that responder will rarely raise opener's minor when having a major to show, it is logical for new suits by opener to show stoppers rather than necessarily a second suit. A bid of three of the agreed minor is a weak action, showing a minimum opening hand that would have passed a traditional limit raise.

Any other action by opener below three of the agreed minor is forcing for at least one round. Any action by either player that takes the bidding above three of the agreed minor creates a game force. If you play splinters in other situations (strongly recommended), you will play that a jump in a new suit by opener shows a shortage in the suit bid and slam interest.

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|---------------|
| 1♦ | 2♦ (inverted) |
| ? | |

| Hand 4 | Hand 5 | Hand 6 |
|------------|-------------|--------------|
| ♠ 8 6 4 | ♠ 6 4 | ♠ 6 |
| ♥ A Q 5 | ♥ Q J 5 2 | ♥ A Q 8 4 |
| ♦ A K J 10 | ♦ A K J 6 3 | ♦ K 10 5 4 2 |
| ♣ Q 8 4 | ♣ J 4 | ♣ A Q 10 |

With Hand 4, which is balanced, you are thinking of a 3NT contract. It would not be appropriate, however, to commit to a no-trump contract without a spade stopper. You should rebid 2♥, showing a heart stopper. Since 2♥ is the cheapest bid, you do not deny a stopper in another suit.

Hand 5 is a minimum opener. If all partner has is limit raise, you are happy to stop in 3♦. That is what you bid.

Hand 6 looks promising. If partner has extra values and little or nothing wasted in spades, you could be in the slam zone. You should jump to 3♠, showing at least game values and a shortage in spades.

How does opener continue after the weak jump raise? Many hands pass – you need eleven tricks to make game in a minor, which is a lot even with a fit if partner is weak. If you bid a suit at the three level, it shows a stopper in the suit bid and normally denies a stopper in any suit bypassed.

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|---------------|
| 1♦ | 3♦ (inverted) |
| ? | |

| Hand 7 | Hand 8 | Hand 9 |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| ♠ A J 2 | ♠ K Q 2 | ♠ K Q 2 |
| ♥ J 4 | ♥ 10 | ♥ 10 4 |
| ♦ A Q J 8 7 | ♦ A Q J 8 7 | ♦ A Q J 8 7 |
| ♣ Q 10 3 | ♣ A Q 4 3 | ♣ A Q 3 |

With Hand 7 you pass. If partner has Hand 1, 3♦ is all you can make.

With Hand 8 you jump to 5♦. You have a strong opener and good shape.

With Hand 9 you bid 3♠. This shows a spade stopper and draws attention to the need for a heart stopper for 3NT.

Is a single raise still strong after an overcall?

No – a single raise becomes weak (you cue bid with a good hand). ■

reserved for showing both minors.

that is worth a nice swing. ■