THE SINGLE RAISE

In a Major

This raise is based on support tricks that may be in high cards or mainly distributional. When you raise 1♥ to 2♥, partner will take you to have at least ♠84 ♥Q1072 ♦984 ♣A752 or ♠9653 ♥J10653 ♦K74 ♣3. Just because partner would regard these as minimum hands for the raise does not mean that raises are never made with weaker hands. It is the same as with sub-minimum opening bids and overcalls--you risk misleading partner because good bidding has to be competitive as well as constructive. Of course, having raised 1♠ to 2♠ with a hand like ♠K763 ♥104 ♦J862 ♣942, you do not jump to 4♠ over a 3♦ game try rebid by opener, just because the hand "fits." A sub-minimum becomes only a minimum when the hand fits, not a maximum.

Over RHO's takeout double, however, sub-minimum raises are standard procedure. They can also be a little light when RHO overcalls, as that may be the last chance to show support.

At the other end of the spectrum are hands that are top-heavy for a single raise, but present no good alternative. These are the 4-3-3-3 hands with no side suit:

♠KQJ3 ♥A42 ♦542 ♣653

♠AK8 ♥QJ7 ♦7543 ♣862

Just raise 1♠ to 2♠ with these hands. The first one is not worth a limit jump raise to 3♠. With the second hand, a game try is just plain bad bidding. If we subtract a point for poor distribution, these 10 HCP hands are really just nine-pointers.

Adequate trump support for a raise is nominally J10x or better, but with good ruffing ability or extra strength in high cards, raises are sometimes in order with three small cards.

In a Minor

Prefer a 1NT response (6-9 HCP, even over 1♣) to a minor suit raise, if the hand looks suitable for notrump play.

Usually prefer a major suit response to a minor suit raise, but the raise is often correct. The issue is discussed in section 3-1, One-Over-One Responses.

Three-card minor suit raises are sometimes necessary in competition, but otherwise are rare (and only in diamonds). Raise 1♦ to 2♦ with ♠5 ♥763 ♦AQ2 ♣J97642. If the minors were reversed and the opening was 1♣, a 1♦ response would be preferable to 2♣ (by far).