

SLAM BIDDING

©Kitty Cooper 2017

I. WHEN PARTNER OPENS 1NT- ADD THE POINTS UP

It takes 33 points to make a small slam and 37 to make a grand. Do you have them? When you have a good balanced hand of your own, add your points to partner's minimum and maximum to see what the possibilities are. The following table shows your bids over 1NT, the point ranges assume a 16-18 1NT opener.

Bid	Your HCPs	Meaning
4NT	15-16	Please bid 6 with a maximum
5NT	19-20	Please bid 7 with a maximum, else bid only 6
6NT	17-18	This is what we can make (you may not raise)
7NT	21+	This is it.

Exercise 1. Partner opens 1NT, 16-18, make a bid with each of the following hands:

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
♠A4	♠KQ6	♠AQ6	♠A98	♠KJ9
♥J109	♥KQ4	♥K7	♥KQJ	♥AK43
♦AK63	♥K532	♦K432	♦KQ7	♦KJ32
♣KJ43	♣A75	♣AKQ3	♣AJ72	♣J6
Pts _____				
Bid _____				

II. USING STAYMAN WITH A SLAM TRY

When you have a four card major and a strong balanced hand, use Stayman before jumping in NT. The 4-4 fit will often make an extra trick for a better score. If partner bids your major, you can jump to 5 of the major to say "bid 6 with a maximum," otherwise you can make the same bids in NT that were available immediately over 1NT. This means that 4NT is not Blackwood when partner opens in NT. ,

Partner	You	Meaning
1NT	2♣	
2♥	4NT	Says bid 6NT if you are maximum else pass (and shows 4 spades)

1NT	2♣	
2♠	5♠	Says bid 6♠ if you are maximum
		else pass

Exercise 2. Partner opens 1NT, 16-18, make a bid with the following hands. Should you choose Stayman, indicate what your next bid will be when partner bids your major and when partner does not.

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
♠A4	♠KQ6	♠AQ62	♠A98	♠KJ93
♥J1098	♥KQ42	♥K7	♥KQJ7	♥AK4
♦AK63	♦K532	♦K42	♦K3	♦KJ32
♣KJ43	♣A7	♣AKQ3	♣AJ72	♣J6
Pts _____				
Bid 1 _____				
Bid 2 _____				
or 2 _____				
or 2 _____				

III. USING JACOBY TRANSFERS WITH A SLAM TRY

For those of you who have learned Jacoby transfers, a transfer followed by a bid in NT is the same as bidding NT directly over 1NT, except that *5NT after a transfer ask partner to choose which slam to play*. So 6NT is used to ask for a choice between 6 or 7.

Partner	You	Meaning
1NT	2♦	
2♥	4NT	Asks partner to bid 6♥ or 6NT if maximum, else pass (5♥ is to play)
1NT	2♥	
2♠	5♠	Asks partner to bid 6♠ if maximum, else pass
1NT	2♥	
2♠	5NT	Asks partner to choose between 6♠ and 6NT
1NT	2♦	
2♥	6NT	Asks partner to pick between 6NT and 7♠ or 7NT

IV. THE GERBER CONVENTION

You cannot use Blackwood in NT auctions, because 4NT is a quantitative slam try. Another bid is used to ask for aces, which is 4♣, the Gerber convention. You must not alert it - no ace asking bids are alertable.

Suppose you hold a hand with a lot of tricks, such as:

♠3
♥KQJ109643
♦5
♣KQJ

This evaluates to 16 points, but it is easy to see that if partner has all four aces, you will make 7NT, that with three aces 6♥ will make, but with fewer aces, no slam will make at all. Therefore, all you really want to do is ask for aces.

1NT - 4♣	How many aces do you have?
4♦	0 or all 4
4♥	1
4♠	2
4NT	3

Remember the following rule: 4♣ is Gerber is whenever you jump to it over partner's NT bid. You can also play that 4♣ is Gerber when bid immediately after Stayman and after Jacoby transfers. This is particularly useful when your side has the requisite 33 or 37 points, but you have counted distribution heavily, so that you could easily be missing an ace or two.

1NT 2♣
2♥ 4♣ How many aces do you have?

Note that after using 4♣ Gerber for aces, 5♣ asks for kings. and 4NT is to play

Exercise 3. Partner opens 1NT, 16-18, and you hold the following hands, make a bid:

A.		B.	
♠K2	Pts _____	♠KQJ3	Pts _____
♥KQJ987	Bid 1 _____	♥KQ98	Bid 1 _____
♦KQ98	Bid 2 _____	♦3	Bid 2 _____
♣3	or _____	♣KQ72	or _____
	or _____		or _____

VI. USE THE SAME CONVENTIONS OVER BIGGER NT OPENERS

When partner opens 2NT, again add your points to their minimum and maximum and if you are in slam zone you can use 4NT quantitative to invite a slam. 3♣ is still Stayman and 4♣ is still Gerber. So all the charts for bidding after 1NT apply. *The exception is that after using Stayman or transferring, 4♣ is no longer a jump, so it cannot be Gerber.* Many players use the leap to 5♣ to ask for aces, this is called Super Gerber.

The problem comes **when partner opens 3NT**, since 4♣ has to be Stayman, there is no ace asking bid unless you choose to play the Super Gerber convention and use 5♣ (after which 6♣ would ask for kings).

VII SLAM TRIES IN SUIT AUCTIONS: CUE-BIDDING

Point count is not very accurate with unbalanced hands that have a fit. Tricks and controls, or controls with distribution and lots of trump are the hand types that make slam easily with less than 33 points. For example, the following two deals both make slam and neither has the required points.

West	East
♠AJ3	♠KQ10987
♥KQJ1085	♥A97
♦A3	♦965
♣85	♣6

West	East
♠AJ987	♠KQ1065
♥4	♥A9854
♦A7652	♦5
♣A7	♣63

In the first example there are 13 tricks available (6 spades, 6 hearts, and 1 diamond) and the opponents have only 1 trick. The ♣A. Here there are plenty of tricks in hearts and spades with both minor suits controlled, one on the first round (ace of diamonds) and the other on the second (singleton club). The auction would start

1♥ 1♠
 3♥ ?

Now East should say to herself,

" My partner has a good 6 card heart suit and I have the ace - 6 tricks, if she has the ♠A I have 6 spade tricks, if she has the ♦A as well, or the ♣A and the ♦K then the opponents cannot cash 2 tricks before we take our 12."

So how does East make a slam try? She makes a cue-bid of 4♣. In this type of auction, 4♥ is always a playable game as is perhaps 3NT or 4♠. You would not go looking for a

minor suit to play in, thus bidding 4 of a minor shows a control. The bid of a control rather than a real suit is called a cue bid, it usually shows the ace, but sometimes can be the king or a singleton with interest in slam. How do you think the above auction should proceed?

West		East	
1♥		1♠	
3♥		4♣	cue-bid
4♦	cue-bid	4♥	well, I made my slam try
4♠	cue-bid	6♥	that's what I needed to hear

New suits, once we have established a fit, are usually cue bids. They are always cue-bids when you have a major suit and the auction cannot stop below game. If your fit is in a minor, new suits below 3NT are usually tries for NT (I can stop this unbid suit, can you stop the other one?), but new suits above 3NT are cue-bids.

Exercise 4. In the following unfinished auctions is the last bid a cue-bid (Y or N)?

A.	
1♥	1♠
3♠	4♦?

B.	
1♠	2♣
3♠	4♦?

C.	
1♥	2♦
3♦	4♣?

D.	
1♦	1♥
2♥	3♣?

E	
1♥	2♥
3♦?	

F	
1♠	3♠
4♣?	

G	
1♠	2♣
3♣	3♥?

Exercise 5. What would you bid on each of the following hands:

<p>A. 1♥ 1♠ 3♠ ?</p> <p>♠AK8764 ♥K3 ♦A43 ♣86</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>B. 1♥ 2♦ 3♦ ?</p> <p>♠765 ♥A2 ♦KQJ9865 ♣3</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>C 1♦ 1♥ 3♥ ?</p> <p>♠K654 ♥QJ43 ♦543 ♣A2</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>D. 1♠ 2♥ 3♥?</p> <p>♠A4 ♥KQJ986 ♦32 ♣K75</p> <p>_____</p>
---	---	--	--

Exercise 6 What suit do you hope to hear your partner cue-bid on the three hands above where you cue-bid?

<p>A.</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>B.</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>C.</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>D.</p> <p>_____</p>
-------------------------------	-------------------------------	-------------------------------	-------------------------------

Exercise 7. What would you bid next if partner in the above 2 hands bid:

<p>A. 4♥?</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>B. 4♦?</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>C.</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>D. 4♠?</p> <p>_____</p>
-----------------------------------	-----------------------------------	-------------------------------	-----------------------------------

To summarize, once you have a fit, *when you need to tell partner that you have a hand that might be suitable for slam, you make a cue-bid.* Often you need to know that partner has specific controls before bidding a slam, you find this out by using cue-bids rather than Blackwood. It is also possible to bid 4NT, Blackwood, after you hear partner cue-bid the suit that you were looking for a control in.

VIII When to Use BLACKWOOD

A commonly asked question is when should you use Blackwood as opposed to using cue-bidding . The answer is that that *you shouldn't use Blackwood without a first or second round control in every suit.* Also, you should not use it if partner's answer would not help you decide whether or not to bid a slam. If you have a doubleton or a tripleton with no ace or king in it, then you have no way of knowing that the opponents couldn't cash the AK of that suit. When one suit is not controlled, that is the time to use cue-bidding rather than Blackwood.