



# Adventures in Bridge

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## *This Week in Bridge*

### **(410) Other Slam Bidding Tools**

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Level: 8 of 10 (4 of 6)

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#### **General**

There are many types of hands that may be able to take 12 or more tricks. Depending on the hand and the auction we may need different tools to get the information needed to make a decision about whether or not to bid slam. The more slam bidding tools we have, the easier it will be to determine if partner has the hand we need to them to hold to make slam a good contact. Here we look at a variety of different tools that can be used to explore slam with partner.

#### **Quantitative Bids**

Quantitative bids are bids that ask partner how they feel about their hand for slam. We use a cooperative bidding process to see if our side should bid a slam. A quantitative bid asks partner to bid slam if they like their hand and to pass if they do not.

##### *Example 1*

♠ A64

♥ KQ4

♦ AJ93

♣ K83

1NT    4NT

4NT is Quantitative. This asks Opener to pass with a minimum hand or bid a small slam with a maximum hand - usually 6NT, but Opener can suggest other places to play bidding a 5-card suit at the 6-level.

##### *Example 2*

♠ A64

♥ KQ4

♦ AT93

♣ AK3

1NT    5NT

5NT is also Quantitative, but this time trying for a grand slam. Opener bids a small slam with a minimum hand and bids 7NT with a maximum hand.



*Example 3 – Slam Try with a 4-card Major*

♠ AT64  
♥ KQ4  
♦ A3  
♣ KT83  
1NT 2♣  
2♥ 4NT

This is not an Ace-asking bid. 4NT is Quantitative showing a balanced 16-17 points and a 4-card ♠ suit.

*Example 4 – Slam Try with a 5-card Major*

♠ K9  
♥ AK854  
♦ K83  
♣ QJ8  
1NT 2♦\*  
2♥ 4NT

This bid is not Ace-asking (Blackwood or Keycard). Here 4NT is Quantitative, after showing 5-card ♥.

### The Principle of Fast Arrival

This is the single most important principle in all modern slam bidding. The idea is that when we are in a “forcing auction,” jumping to game is the weakest action, and bids below game show extra values. Most people are familiar with *The Principle of Fast Arrival* from Jacoby 2NT auctions even if they have not heard the term before:

- 1♠ - 2NT\* - 4♠ No shortness, minimum hand
- 1♠ - 2NT\* - 3♠ No shortness, much stronger hand

In 2/1 Game Forcing auctions, we have lots of opportunities to make use of the principle of Fast Arrival.

*Example 6*

1♠ 2♦  
2♠ \_\_\_?  
3♠ Responder shows slam interest, asks Opener to start bidding controls.  
4♠ Responder shows a minimum hand with no slam interest.

*Example 7*

1♠ 2♦  
2♥ 2♠  
\_\_\_?  
3♠ Opener shows slam interest, asks Responder to start bidding controls.  
4♠ Opener shows a minimum hand with no slam interest.



## Responding to Keycard with a Useful Void

With an outside void, we can use 5NT and 6♣, the next two cheapest unused bids in response to a Keycard ask, to describe a hand with a void.

4NT    \_\_\_?

- 5NT                      Even # of Keycards and a *useful* void
- 6♣                        Odd # of Keycards and a *useful* void

Partner can now either stop in a small slam OR bid a grand slam if they can determine if the void makes this a good contract.

### ***What is a “Useful” Void?***

It is important to use our judgement when considering showing a void to partner. We should only show a void if we think it will be useful to partner. If partner has shown length in the suit in which we are void or if partner has cuebid the Ace in our void suit, then the void is not likely to be useful and we should not show it over 4NT. In this case, we can just answer Keycards normally at the 5-level.

### **5NT Not Just a King Ask – Grand Slam Try**

Most partnerships use 5NT, after a 4NT Keycard ask, as a grand slam try. This is usually a King ask, either Number or Specific Kings, based on your partnership agreement, but it also shows that our side has all 5 of the Keycards as well as the trump Queen. (This is because we would not be interested in exploring a grand slam missing one of these cards.). This means that we do not need to show our Kings if we have a source of tricks. If we believe we can count 13 tricks, knowing our side has all the Keycards and the trump Queen, then we can just bid a Grand Slam.

#### *Example 8*

1♠      2NT\*

3♠      4♣

4NT     5♥

5NT     \_\_\_.

♠ KJ32

♥ K5

♦ KQJT7

♣ A4

Here when partner bids 5NT we know our side has at least 5♠, 2♥, 5♦, and 1♣ – 13 tricks. So we can just bid 7NT.



### 5NT “Choice of Slam”

A jump to 5NT is often used as a practical bid that says, “I know I want to play a slam, but I’m not sure which one. Help me figure out which slam we should play.” This kind of auction is particularly useful playing Matchpoints, where making 6NT when others are making 6-suit can be an excellent result.

#### Example 9

1♠ 2♣  
3♣ 3♠  
5NT

In this auction, we have two fits – ♣ and ♠. We can explore a ♠ slam by using 4NT Keycard, or we can imply weak ♠ and strong ♣ by jumping to 6♣, strongly indicating a desire to play there with something like ♣AKJx. Another option is to bid 5NT as “choice of slams” – to get input from partner about which slam to play.

Over our 5NT bid, partner can now bid 6♣ with decent ♣ (say if they made a 2/1 GF bid with ♣KQxxx or something similar) or bid 6♠ if they have good ♠ support (say ♠Hxx or better) and not great ♣.

#### Example 10

♠ K32  
♥ AK54  
♦ A76  
♣ Q432

Here we’re likely to choose to play 6♠ over partner’s 5NT choice of slams because we do not have very good ♣ but we do have Hxx in ♠.

#### Example 11

2NT 3♣  
3♥ 5NT

This 5NT bid is also a choice of slams bid (not agreeing to ♥, and not Grand Slam Force.) Opener can:

- Bid a 4-card minor at 6♣ or 6♦ (offering along the way to 6NT possibly),
- Rebid a 5-card ♥ suit with 6♥ in case Responder has a fit,
- Bid 6♠ with 4-card ♠ support, as that appears to be why Responder bid Stayman, or
- Bid 6NT with nothing else to say.



## 5-Major Obvious Question – Trump Suit Quality

In constructive bidding auctions (where our side has shown strength), we use a 5-Major bid (in a suit that we have been bidding) to ask partner for a specific piece of information that would otherwise be difficult to obtain. When no other suits have been bid (or at least very few) then we use a bid of 5-Major as a *Trump Suit Quality Ask*. This asks partner to bid slam with 2 of the top 3 honors in the trump suit and otherwise pass.

### Example 12

5♠ Opening Bid

Some partnerships play that an opening bid of 5♥ is preemptive, but few play this with an opening bid of 5♠. Most play that this asks Responder to bid slam with a good ♠ holding.

### Example 13

1♠ P 5♠

This 5♠ bid by Responder asks Opener to bid slam with 2 of the top 3 honors in the ♠ suit.

The reason that we may choose to use this trump suit quality asking tool, instead of 4NT Keycard, is that we may have an outside void. In this case, Keycard may not help us determine if slam is a good contract. Here are some example hands where we may want to use a trump suit quality asking bid:

### Example 14

♠ KJT9xxxx

♥ --

♦ Ax

♣ AKQ

Here we just open 5♠ and ask partner to bid slam with 2 of the top 3 honors.

### Example 15

♠ JT9xxx

♥ --

♦ AKQJx

♣ AK

With this hand we open 1♠, hear partner raise to 2♠, and then we bid 5♠ to ask partner to bid slam with 2 of the top 3 honors in the ♠ suit.

*Note: This is our default meaning for 5-Major, when no other special meaning can be determined.*



### 5-Major Obvious Question – Control in the Opponent’s Suit

When we are in a constructive bidding sequence (we have values and are clearly not preempting the bidding) but the opponents are also bidding and we are exploring the possibility of slam, one of the common problems that we face is determining if our side has a control in the opponents’ suit (off two quick losers in both hands?) When we have a control in the opponents’ suit, we can often use a control-showing bid to communicate this to partner; but if we have an excellent hand and want to bid slam but are lacking a control in the opponents’ suit, we can use 5-Major to ask partner if they have a control.

#### Example 16

1♠    3♣    4♠    P  
5♠  
♠ AKxxxx  
♥ A  
♦ AKJx  
♣ xx

This is a hand that is interested in slam as long as partner has a control (Ace, King, Singleton, or Void) in the opponents’ suit – ♣. A bid of 5♠ asks partner to bid slam with a control here.

#### Example 17

1♥    3♦    5♥

They are the preempting side, and we are the strong side, so we do not “preempt a preempt”. This asks Opener for a ♦ control.

### 5-Major Obvious Question – Control in the Unbid Suit

When we are trying for slam (in an uncontested auction) and we have started to use CSB to determine that we have controls in all the unbid suits (except one), then we can use a bid of 5-Major to ask partner for a control in the one remaining uncontrolled suit.

#### Example 18

1♠    3♠  
4♣    4♦  
5♠

This is the type of bid we make with an excellent hand, but two quick losers in the ♥ suit. By bidding 5♠ we let partner know we want to bid a slam, but we are worried about the uncontrolled suit, ♥.



## Conclusion

As you can see there are many bidding tools that are used to explore slam. Each one that you add to your partnership's bidding system will allow you to better explore slam. Work on developing your bidding system by adding these types of tools and practicing using them!