

Scoring - Competing and Game bidding

It is rarely correct to play in five of a minor when playing pairs. It usually produces a bad score.

And if your two hands are balanced it is often worth thinking about 3NT rather than playing in four of a major. Often the same number of tricks can be made and so the NT game will give you a better score at pairs.

Eg

West	East
♠ A 8 4 2	♠ K 7 5 3
♥ K Q 3	♥ J 5 2
♦ A 3	♦ K Q 2
♣ 8 4 3 2	♣ A K 9

In the above hands East/West have an eight card spade fit. If West opens 1NT (12-14) and East uses Stayman then the partnership is likely to end up in four spades.

This contract will lose one club, the Ace of hearts and one or two spades, depending on how they break.

If East just bids 3NT then you are likely to make exactly the same number of tricks, and this will be a better score at pairs (indeed, if the spades break 4-1, then you are likely to go off in 4 spades, but make 3NT).

If the points are roughly evenly split, say each side has 18-22, then, if you are both bidding and supporting a suit, it is generally best to bid to the level of the number of trumps you hold

Eg

West	East
♠ T 8	♠ 7 4
♥ A 6 2	♥ T 9 5
♦ K Q 5 4 2	♦ A 7 4 3
♣ K 4 3	♣ A 6

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	2♦	2♠
?			

Here East/West have already raised a suit. Should West compete to 3 diamonds?

He knows East has four card diamond support, so they 9 trumps between them. Therefore he should bid 3 diamonds.

If North/South bid three spades then probably neither East nor West should bid further. 2 spades probably makes for North/South (they are likely to make three heart tricks and five spade tricks), but three spades is likely to go off (A and K of clubs and a club ruff, together with two red aces.)

3 diamonds is likely to make for East/West scoring 5 diamond tricks, A of hearts, AK of clubs and a club ruff in the dummy.

In a high level competitive auction (ie in a "pressure" situation) generally be prepared to bid one more than you would bid normally to secure the contract.

West	North	East	South
♠ 9 3		♠ 3	
♥ A Q J T 2		♥ K 8 7 4 3	
♦ A K Q		♦ 7 4 3 2	
♣ Q 4 2		♣ A 7 6	

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	4♠
?			

Here West, without the intervention, would have bid 4 hearts. So in this pressure situation it is reasonable to bid to 5 hearts. This contract may make, but if it doesn't then it is quite probable that North/South may have made 4 spades.

If North/South go on to 5 spades, West should consider doubling, and that is probably the right course of action. But beware - they are times when the only tricks East/West make are a club and a diamond!