

U3A Improver's Bridge

Lesson 13: Strong Bids and Slam Bidding

First a quick reminder of our strong bids – bids that demand a response from partner, no matter how awful their hand may be.

Our very strongest bid is 2C – 23+ points, any shape or GAME in hand

Responses: You **must** keep bidding until game reached – less than 7 points, 2D negative, otherwise bid naturally;

2D/H/S 8 playing tricks, 17+ points

Responses: You **must** respond at least once, negative = 2NT (less than 8 pts), otherwise bid naturally

2NT 20-22pts, balanced/semi balanced

Responses: You can pass – if you have a hand with less than 3 points, otherwise bid naturally or look for 4 card majors with 3C (Stayman)

Remember, as a quick check and guide – you need 25 points for game, 30 points and a fit in a suit (or suits) for a slam in that suit and 33 points for a no trump slam.

Suppose you hold the number of points which make a slam a possibility. To make 12 tricks (a Small Slam) we need to be sure that the opposition can't cash 2 Aces or any Aces at all if we are in a Grand Slam, looking to take all 13 tricks. How can we find out – legally!?! There are two methods, one of which has a variation.

(a) Blackwood

The bid of 4NT asks partner to tell you how many Aces they hold:

5C – 0 Aces OR all 4;

5D – 1 Ace (of any suit, not just diamonds);

5H – 2 Aces (any suits)

5S – 3 Aces (any suits)

Partner's next bid of 5NT asks the same question for Kings

6C = 0 Kings OR all 4; 6D = 1 King; 6H = 2 Kings; 6S = 3 Kings – again purely the NUMBER of Kings you hold, NOT the suits in which you hold the Kings

The Gerber Convention (variation on Blackwood) is used after opening bids of 1 or 2 No Trumps.

The bid of 4C asks the same question as 4NT above

4D = 0 or 4 Aces;

4H = 1 Ace;

4S = 2 Aces and

4NT = 3 Aces

If partner wants then to ask for Kings they bid 5C and your responses follow the same steps: 5D = 0 or 4 Kings; 5H = 1 King; 5S = 2 Kings; 5NT = 3 Kings

There are some general guides to consider

- (1) Don't use Blackwood or Gerber with two losers in an unbid suit unless you are sure partner holds the A or K (or has a singleton if you are planning to play in a suit)
- (2) Don't ask for Kings unless you are sure you hold all the Aces.
- (3) Never use Blackwood or Gerber with a void in your hand – use a Cue Bid

(b) Cue Bids

When a suit is agreed in a forcing auction, a new suit at the 4 level is a cue bid showing a first or second round control in that suit (A,K void or singleton). Normally, at the first bid, you show your lowest first round control but in some cases it will be a second round control. Partner can then cue bid their controls, if appropriate, in ascending order.

N AJ7 AQ9632 74 K9

S KQ98 K84 AJ32 A8

1H, P, 1S, P, 3H, P, 4NT, P, 5H, P, 5NT, P, 6H, P, 7NT or 7H

N AJ7 53 K AKJ10975

S KQ95 AK987 A108 3

1C, P, 1H, P, 3C, P, 3S, P, 4C, P, 4NT, P, 5H, P, 5NT, P, 6H, - 6NT, 7C, 7NT could all be correct, 'Are you feeling lucky, punk?' as Clint asked