

## The Game Invitation

Today I want to talk about the game invite, or the invitation presented to you when your partner invites you to raise the bidding to the game level in any suit, including no-trumps.

There are a variety of scenarios where this can occur. Let's look at the following real example.

The screenshot shows a bridge hand interface. At the top left, it says 'Dir: North' and 'Vul: E/W'. The dealer's cards are: ♠ K J 9 8 2, ♥ J 9 8 2, ♦ 9 5, ♣ J 6. The optimum score is 'S 5Sx -100'. The hand is dealt with North and South facing each other. North's cards are: ♠ 6, ♥ --, ♦ K 8 7 6 3 2, ♣ A K Q 8 5 3. South's cards are: ♠ Q 7 3, ♥ K 7 6 4 3, ♦ Q J 4, ♣ 4 2. The bidding is shown as 25, with West and East facing each other. Below the cards, there are buttons for 'View Larger' and 'Play it again'. At the bottom, there is a table titled 'Board No 25 E/W Vul Dealer North'.

NS	EW	Bid	By	Ld	Tks	+Sc	-Sc	+	-
1	6	2♣	N	♦J	8	110		6	0
4	3	4♦	E	♥10	11		150	4	2
2	5	5♦*	W	♠8	11		750	1	5
8	7	5♦*	W	♣J	11		750	1	5

In this example, only two of four tables in the N-S orientation get into a 5D contract, which analysis shows is gettable. On one other table, N-S stops short at 4D, whilst the fourth sees E-W get into 2S. How might the bidding go?

North deals and, first round, passes. East passes. South bids 1C, showing opening points. West overcalls 1D showing enough points and a 5-card diamond suit.

Second round: North responds 1S. East may bid 1NT (showing interest but <10 HCPs, and with an intention of showing hearts in the next round) or may bid 2D, showing 6-9 TPs (Total Points) and 3 or more diamonds. Either way, south bids 2S. If East had bid 2D (instead of 1NT), West would now re-asses and conclude 12HCP + 8DP + 1LP = 21TPs. 21TPs plus 6-9 HCPs from East may be enough for game, but only if East is holding maximum, not minimum. So West may jump bid to 4D, inviting East to bid to game.

Third round. North knows N-S has a match in spades and counts TPs. 6HCP + 2DPs + 1LP = 9TPs. Not enough to bid to 4S but North may venture 3S (or may not as it is problematic with only 9TPs). Now, East has to decide whether to accept or decline the game invitation offered by West. Here is what players should do in this situation:

- Not guess!
- Ask yourself, what does partner already know - in this case you've already told West that you have 6-9 TPs, so that is what West would have taken on board.
- What West is asking is, "I know you have 6-9TPs but I don't have enough points to bid directly to game, so I've invited you to make the decision".
- The correct response from East is: with minimum TPs (ie 6-7), Pass the game invitation, with maximum TPs (ie 8-9TPs), accept the game invitation and raise to 5D.

The game invitation may arise in any number of scenarios, eg 1H-3H, 1S-2S-3S, 1NT-2NT. Note, in the 1S-2S-3S scenario it is the responder that is being invited to make the decision, not the opener. But, in all scenarios, the thinking sequence by the person invited to make the decision is exactly the same as shown in the above example. Ask yourself, what information has already been passed to your partner. In almost every scenario, it will then come down to: with minimum TPs, you pass, but with maximum TPs, you raise to game. Note: in no-trumps, as we know, TPs are HCPs, as there are no distribution points.