§41. Slam Bidding 1. Quantitative No-trump Raises.

By the end of this chapter you should understand the following term:

A **Quantitative** raise: A raise of a bid in No-trumps to 4NT is a *slam invitation*. Partner is expected either to Pass or to advance to a slam (6NT), depending on whether he is maximum or minimum for his bidding to date.

A 4NT raise is analogous to a 2NT raise of a 1NT opener. It *passes the buck*. In this case, though, the option is not a game or a part-score but a game or a slam.

Part 1. Introduction. Slams and Slam Scoring.

Slams have always fascinated bridge players and some pairs can become obsessed with bidding them. Rewards for success can be great, as the scoring table below shows.

	Non-vulnerable	Vulnerable
Small Slam	500	750
Grand Slam	1000	1500

A vulnerable grand slam is worth a bonus, therefore, of 1500 points. In duplicate scoring (or Chicago scoring) a successful vulnerable contract of 7NT would be worth 2220 points, made up from 220 points for tricks, a 500 point game bonus and a 1500 point grand slam bonus. That's a lot of points!

The table below is a standard ready reckoner for slams bid and made, including Doubled contracts (indicated by the × symbol).

Slam scores

		6	6×	6+1	6+1×	7	7×
NT	NV	990	1230	1020	1330	1520	1790
	Vul	1440	1680	1470	1880	2220	2490
♠ ♥	NV	980	1210	1010	1310	1510	1770
	Vul	1430	1660	1460	1860	2210	2470
♦ ♣	NV	920	1090	940	1190	1440	1630
	Vul	1370	1540	1390	1740	2140	2330

Part 2. No-trump Slams by Power.

Everybody remembers the **Rule of 25** in that two balanced hands containing 25 or more points should contract for 3NT. This principle can be extended to slam bidding.

Experience suggests that a partnership should play two balanced hands in a No-trump small slam if they have **33 or more** points between the two hands. To bid a No-trump grand slam (7NT, in other words), 37+ points are really required.

In practice, bidding these things often requires little more than simple arithmetic. That is: adding up what you can see in front of your face to what your partner has announced.

Consider Examples 1, 2 and 3 below. In each case partner opens 1NT (showing 12-14 points as usual). What would you respond?

Ex 1.	**Ex 2.**	**Ex 3.**
♠ A K Q J ♥ A Q J ♦ Q J 9 ♣ A Q J	♠ A J ♥ A Q 2 ♦ Q J 3 ♣ A Q J 7 4	♠ A J ♥ A Q 2 ♦ Q J 3 ♣ K J 7 4 2

In Example 1 the combined total of points is 39-41 (!), so you should bid 7NT without stopping to admire the view. If that fails to make there would be stewards' enquiry for sure. In Example 2 the combined total of points is 33-35, so you should bid a prompt 6NT (Clubs? What Clubs?) In Example 3 the **maximum** combined point-count is 32; it is actually 30-32. Settle for 3NT and expect overtricks.

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Part 3. Inbetweeny Hands – the *Quantitative Raise*.

If you know that your side has 33+ points you can contract for a small slam in No-trumps. What if you aren't sure? Take Example 4; partner opens 1NT and this is your responding hand:

Ex 4.
♠ K J 6
♥ A K 5
♦ A 7
♣ K J 10 8 3

With 19 points you can deduce that the combined point-count is 31-33, so a slam is not out of the question. However, bidding 6NT immediately would be a reckless venture. What's the solution?

The answer is to make a *quantitative raise* to 4NT. This asks opener to bid 6NT with a maximum and to Pass with a minimum (there are echoes here of the bidding 1NT – 2NT – ? where opener has to reappraise his opening bid).

Part 4. You Don't Have to Start with 1NT.

Any time one member of the partnership makes a limit bid in No-trumps it may be possible for his partner to calculate there are sufficient values for 6NT (or even 7NT). There may also be occasions where a quantitative 4NT raise is appropriate. Here, for instance, in Example 5, partner opens 2NT to show 20-22 points, what is your best response?

Ex 5.
♠ Q J 6
♥ A J 9 3
♦ Q 8 4
♣ Q 9 3

With a combined total of 32-24 points a quantitative (or invitational) raise to 4NT is best. Partner should now make the choice of bidding a slam or remaining in game. The ball is firmly in his court.

Further examples.

What is your best bid as South after the following auctions?

Ex 6. N W E S

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	?

♠ A 9
♥ A 5 3
♦ K Q 10 6 2
♣ A 7 4

7NT. You have a combined 37-39 points (partner has 20-22, remember), so you should have enough to contract for a grand slam. No need to hang around to pick the daisies – the absolute most you could be missing is a King, and that is unlikely to be the case. The Diamonds are a fine *source of tricks*.

Ex 7. N W E S

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♦
Pass	2NT	Pass	?

♠ A 9
♥ A 5 3
♦ K Q 10 6 2
♣ A 7 4

6NT. Partner has proclaimed 17-18 points and you have 17. Adding up what you can see in front of your face to what partner has announced gives you a total of 34-35. That's enough for a small slam and not enough for a grand slam, so you should bid 6NT and expect it to romp home in fine style.

Ex 8. N W E S

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♦
Pass	1NT	Pass	?

♠ A 9
♥ A 5 3
♦ K Q 10 6 2
♣ A 7 4

4NT. Partner has shown 15-16, so your combined total is 32-33 points. 6NT would be a gamble (although not a reckless one). Still, you ought to give partner some leeway with a *quantitative raise* to 4NT. With a maximum 16 he will proceed to a slam; with a minimum 15 points he will Pass 4NT.

Ex 9. N W E S

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	2♣
Pass	2NT	Pass	?

♠ A J 4
♥ K 8
♦ Q 9
♣ A K J 7 5 2

6NT. Clubs? What Clubs? You have honours in all suits, so this combined 33-34 point deal will play as well in No-trumps as in anything else. Just to confirm the arithmetic: North is showing a balanced 15-16 points with his rebid and you have 18 lovely points. No need to indulge in daisy-picking now.

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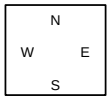
§41. Quiz on Slam Bidding 1. Quantitative No-trump Raises.

In each case you are **South**

In Questions 1 to 6 you are the **responder;** in Questions 7 to 10 you are the **opener**.
What is your best bid after the given auctions?

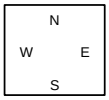
1.



♠ A J 7
♥ A 10
♦ K Q J 9 6
♣ K Q J

West	North	East	South
	1NT	Pass	?

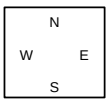
2.



♠ A J 7
♥ A 10
♦ K Q J 9 6
♣ K J 8

West	North	East	South
	1NT	Pass	?

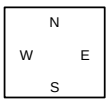
3.



♠ A K 8 7
♥ K J 7
♦ A 10 8
♣ K 9 5

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♠
	1NT	Pass	?

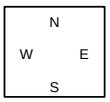
4.



♠ A K 8 7 2
♥ A K 9
♦ A 10 8
♣ K 5

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♠
	2NT	Pass	?

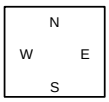
5.



♠ K 9
♥ K 10 8
♦ Q J 10 7 3
♣ Q 8 6

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	?

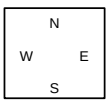
6.



♠ A 9
♥ A 7 6
♦ A 9 8 5
♣ A 10 6 3

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	2♣
	2NT	Pass	?

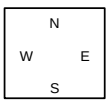
7.



♠ A 9 6
♥ K J 9 6
♦ Q 9 3
♣ Q 10 6

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	4NT	Pass	?

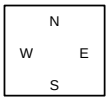
8.



♠ A 10 3
♥ Q 8
♦ A Q J 9 7
♣ K 10 7

West	North	East	South
			1♦
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	4NT	Pass	?

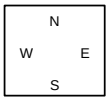
9.



♠ Q 9 7
♥ K J 5
♦ A K Q
♣ Q 10 8 3

West	North	East	South
			1♣
Pass	1♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	4NT	Pass	?

10.



♠ A 10
♥ A K 7
♦ K Q 8
♣ A J 10 7 3

West	North	East	South
			2NT
Pass	4NT	Pass	?

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§41. Quiz on Slam Bidding 1. Quantitative No-trump Raises.
Answers

1.

♠ A J 7
♥ A 10
♦ K Q J 9 6
♣ K Q J

West	North	East	South
	1NT	Pass	?

6NT. Add up what you can see in front of your face (21 points) to partner's announced 12-14 and you come up with a total of 33-35. That's ample for a No-trump slam, so you should take the strain off partner by bidding it immediately. No point in playing the hand in Diamonds.

2.

♠ A J 7
♥ A 10
♦ K Q J 9 6
♣ K J 8

West	North	East	South
	1NT	Pass	?

4NT. This time (cf Q1) the combined total of points comes to 31-33, so you are on the cusp of a slam. Best is to pass the buck by making a *quantitative raise* to 4NT. North should Pass with a minimum and proceed to a slam with a maximum. The ball is in his court.

3.

♠ A K 8 7
♥ K J 7
♦ A 10 8
♣ K 9 5

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♠
	1NT	Pass	?

6NT. Here, the combined total of the partnership is 33-34 (your 18 points facing partner's announced 15-16). That's sufficient for a No-trump slam, so you should simply bid it without stopping to pick the daisies. No point in courting North's opinion – the buck stops here.

4.

♠ A K 8 7 2
♥ A K 9
♦ A 10 8
♣ K 5

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♠
	2NT	Pass	?

7NT. Just count the points – you have a massive 21 and partner, bless his cotton socks, has shown 17-18. That's a combined total of 38-39, so East-West have, at most, a Queen between them. Eschew symapthy; bid the grand slam and expect it to roll in easily.

5.

♠ K 9
♥ K 10 8
♦ Q J 10 7 3
♣ Q 8 6

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	?

4NT. The combined total of points comes to 31-33 as you have 11 and partner 20-22. Best, as in Q2, is to pass the buck by making a *quantitative raise* to 4NT. North should Pass with a minimum 2NT opener and bid 6NT with a maximum. The buck is atop his desk now.

6.

♠ A 9
♥ A 7 6
♦ A 9 8 5
♣ A 10 6 3

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	2♣
	2NT	Pass	?

3NT. Yes, you have 16 points and yes, you have all four Aces, but *do the maths*. North has shown 15-16 points, you have 16 so, **at best**, you have a combined total of 32 points. You have no obvious *source of tricks* in the guise of a long suit, so best to settle for game.

7.

♠ A 9 6
♥ K J 9 6
♦ Q 9 3
♣ Q 10 6

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	4NT	Pass	?

Pass. Quickly. You are rock-bottom minimum to open 1NT, just 12 points and with poor distribution (a 4·3·3·3 pattern). Partner wants to know if you fancy a slam and, with this hand, you want no part of it. You should Pass 4NT and hope to scramble home with ten tricks.

8.

♠ A 10 3
♥ Q 8
♦ A Q J 9 7
♣ K 10 7

West	North	East	South
			1♦
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	4NT	Pass	?

6NT. You have shown 15-16 points with your 1NT rebid and partner is now asking you if you'd care to bid a slam with a maximum for your bidding to date. Well, you are top of the range – you have 16 points with a five-card suit to boot. Bid 6NT, expecting a cakewalk.

9.

♠ Q 9 7
♥ K J 5
♦ A K Q
♣ Q 10 8 3

West	North	East	South
			1♣
Pass	1♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	4NT	Pass	?

Pass. Within your stated range of points (2NT showed 17-18) you are minimum with poor distribution (a 4·3·3·3 pattern). Partner wants to know if you are maximum and hence want to bid a slam; with this flat 17-pointer the answer is a firm **No**. Pass 4NT quickly.

10*.

♠ A 10
♥ A K 7
♦ K Q 8
♣ A J 10 7 3

West	North	East	South
			2NT
Pass	4NT	Pass	?

6NT. You have shown 20-22 points and North wants you to bid a slam with a maximum. Well, you are betwixt and between with 21 points, slap-bang in the middle. What should sway you is that rich *source of tricks*, that lovely five-card Club suit. Give it a go!

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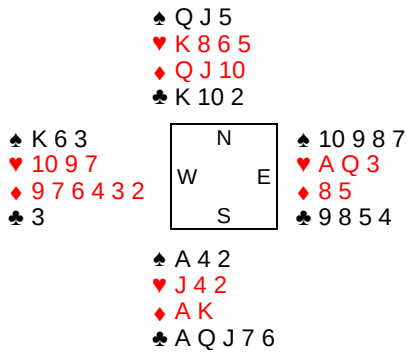
§41. Example hands 1 to 4.

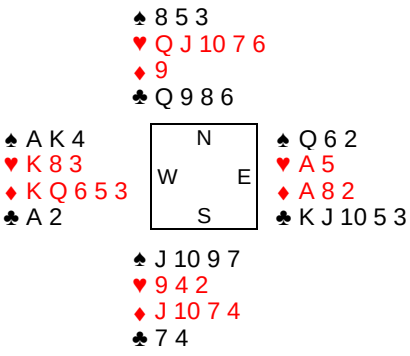
Hand 1 Love all, dealer North



West	North	East	South
	1NT	Pass	4NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	
4NT by North		Opening lead: ♠10	

North has a respectable, if minimum, opening bid of 1NT and South has a small problem in response. South can deduce that his side has a combined holding of 31-33 points, so a slam is in the offing but is not guaranteed. To explain his problem (and to pass the buck) South makes the *quantitative* bid of 4NT, asking North to bid 6NT with a maximum and to Pass with a minimum. With a 4·3·3·3 hand containing just 12 points North has no temptation to bid again. After the ♠10 lead North ducks that to West's ♠K. A Heart switch now would have East-West taking the first three tricks (showing that 4NT is the limit of the hand). Even after a Spade return, declarer can make only two Spades, three Diamonds and five Clubs.

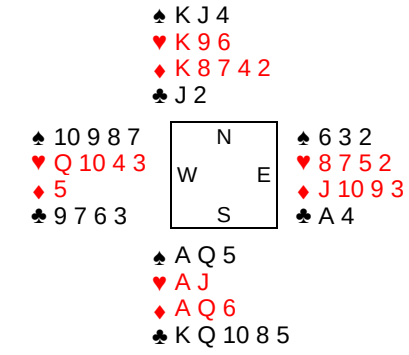
Hand 2 North-South game, dealer East



West	North	East	South
		1NT	Pass
4NT	Pass	6NT	All Pass
6NT by East		Opening lead: ♠J	

East opens 1NT but this time (cf Hand 1) he has a maximum, 14 points and a five-card suit. Once again, his partner is on the cusp of a slam with a 19-point hand containing a five-card suit. West should make a *quantitative raise* to 4NT, allowing East to Pass with a minimum and to advance to a slam with a maximum (as here). After the obvious Spade lead declarer can count three Spades, two Hearts, five Diamonds (assuming a 3-2 break) and two Clubs. No problem – except Diamonds don't split. No matter; East should use the second string to his bow. Before cashing the third top Diamond he should play on Clubs. When they split 4-2 he can concede a trick to the ♣Q, making four Clubs and twelve tricks in all.

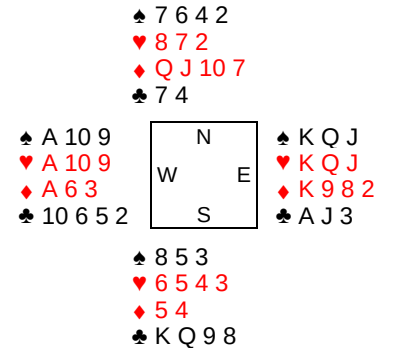
Hand 3 East-West game, dealer South



West	North	East	South
			2NT
Pass	4NT	Pass	6NT
6NT by South		Opening lead: ♠10	

Here, South opens 2NT showing 20-22 balanced and North is caught betwixt and between. Holding 11 points (not to mention a *source of tricks* in the guise of a five-card suit) North can see that a slam may be in the offing. The combined point-count must be 31-33. What to do? Well, with it not being certain that North-South have 33+ points between them, it is best to issue a slam invitation by making a *quantitative raise* to 4NT. The principle is that South should advance with a maximum (22) and Pass with a minimum (20). Here, it's a relatively straightforward matter to go on to 6NT. Although Diamonds don't break, declarer can set up Clubs to make three Spades, two Hearts, three Diamonds and four Clubs.

Hand 4 Game all, dealer West



West	North	East	South
1NT	Pass	4NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		
4NT by West		Opening lead: ♦Q	

West has a minimum but just-about-respectable opening bid of 1NT. (*True, some hands with three Aces and nothing else should be Passed, but here West has "stuffing" in the guise of Tens and Nines)*. East, holding 20 points, can sniff a slam, but should be a little cautious as he has a 4·3·3·3 shape and also has two K Q J combinations, which may not be pulling their weight. With a combined holding of 32-34 the best call is 4NT, allowing West to proceed or Pass as he sees fit. Holding 12 points, West Passes hurriedly. Even 4NT isn't safe (6NT has no chance). The ♦Q lead, though, is unfortunate for North. West takes the ♦A and plays another Diamond, setting up a third trick in the suit with the ♦K 9 8.

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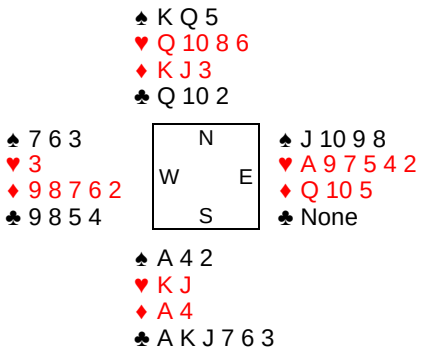
§41. Example hands 5 to 8.

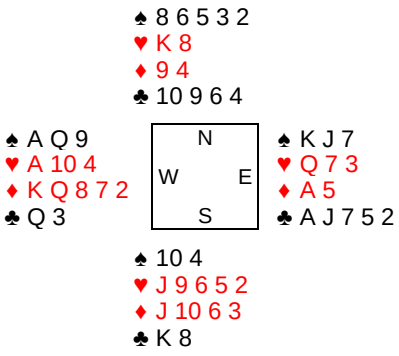
Hand 5 North-South game, dealer North



West	North	East	South
	1NT	Pass	6NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	
6NT by North		Opening lead: ♠J	

North opens 1NT with his 13-point hand and South has to find a sensible response. With 20 points and a fine *source of tricks* in the guise of the long Club suit, the most practical shot is 6NT. Sure, North-South may "only" have 32 points between them, but the long suit makes up for any shortfall. Be cautious with 4·3·3·3 hands (for they play disappointingly) but be more ambitious with 5·3·3·2 hands and, here, with 6·3·2·2 hands. Note that there is no point in playing in Clubs – No-trumps will play just as well. In fact, 6♣ would fail on a Heart lead and Heart ruff at trick two. 6NT is an easy spot, assuming North knocks out the ♥A early. He makes three Spades, three Hearts, two Diamonds and six Clubs – so that's tricks to spare.

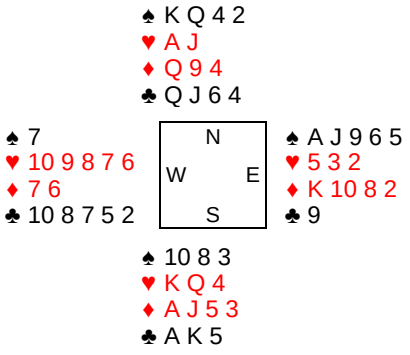
Hand 6 East-West game, dealer East



West	North	East	South
		1♣	Pass
1♦	Pass	1NT	Pass
4NT	Pass	Pass	Pass
4NT by East		Opening lead: ♥5	

East opens 1♣ and rebids 1NT over a one-level response to show 15-16 points. Whither now, West? Well, adding up what he can see in front of his face to what his partner has announced gives West a total of 32-33 points. Taking a flyer at 6NT is possible but ill-advised – best is to consult East on the matter. A *quantitative raise* to 4NT tells his partner to bid a slam if he wants to, more precisely: if he has a maximum 16 points. With only 15, and no intermediate cards, East wisely calls it a day in 3NT. A Heart lead from South, to North's King, makes twelve tricks impossible (unless Diamonds break 3-3 and the Club finesse works). Eleven tricks is the limit.

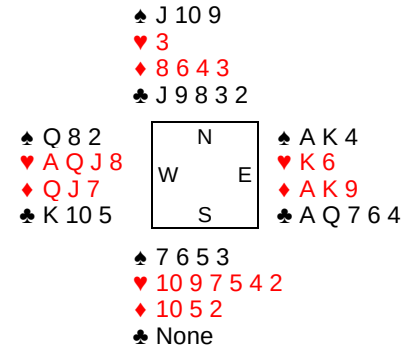
Hand 7 Game all, dealer South



West	North	East	South
			1♦
Pass	1♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	4NT	All Pass	
4NT by South		Opening lead: ♥10	

Another *quantitative raise* rejected. South opens 1♦ and rebids 2NT over North's 1♠ response. The jump rebid in No-trumps shows 17-18 points, so North is able to calculate a combined total of 32-33 points; that's nearly a slam. As bidding 6NT directly would be something of a punt, North makes an invitational bid of 4NT, allowing South to get out of the auction with a minimum hand. South is only too relieved to Pass; within the confines of what he has said (17-18, balanced) he has an abject minimum – 17 points and no obvious *source of tricks*. The contract of 4NT should make easily enough, but there is at least one Spade loser and one Diamond loser in 6NT.

Hand 8 Love all, dealer West



West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	2♣	Pass
2NT	Pass	7NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		
7NT by West		Opening lead: ♠J	

West, a tadt too strong to open 1NT, opens 1♥ and East is looking at a goldmine (23 points). Still, it is vitally important to make a simple response and see what West's natural rebid is. Thus, East bids a simple 2♣ and awaits West next call. That is 2NT, so East knows that West has 15-16 points. Simple arithmetic tells East that his side has a total of 38-39 points. With that information, East bids 7NT at once, no fuss, no bother. The contract is easy to make, despite the 5-0 Club split. On top are three Spades, four Hearts, three Diamonds and three Clubs – and that little lot totals thirteen. The only hard part is adding up the score (1520 when non vulnerable).

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