

## May 6th - Bidding Slams

A small slam is 12 tricks and a grand slam is 13 tricks. The points needed for this are:

	In a trump suit	In no-trumps
Small slam	31-36	33-36
Grand slam	37+	37+

You need more points for a small slam in no-trumps than you do when playing in a trump suit. This is because shortages are less useful - it is all about having balanced hands and points. This is not to say that a long suit isn't useful as long as you have good cards in the other three.

A slam in no-trumps scores 10 more points than a slam in a major so at duplicate play in no-trumps whenever this is possible. However, at duplicate you should be cautious and you should not try for marginal slams - going down when everyone else in the room is making game is not going to give you a good score.

### 4NT as quantitative

If partner opens 2NT (20-22 points) and you have 13 points you can bid 6NT straight away ( $20+13=33$ ). But what if you have 11 or 12 points? If partner has a minimum you don't have enough for a small slam but if they have a maximum you do. In this case bid 4NT which tells partner to bid 6NT with a maximum and pass with a minimum. The same bid is used if partner opens 1NT and you have 19 points so you have a range of points from 31 to 33 ( $12-14+19$ ).

### 4NT as Blackwood

In suit auctions 4NT is the Blackwood convention asking partner to tell you how many aces they have. A reply of  $4\clubsuit$  means none or four,  $4\diamondsuit$  means one,  $4\heartsuit$  means two and  $4\spadesuit$  means three. A 5NT bid then asks the same for kings. The main point of this is to make sure you don't get into a slam with two aces missing. If partner shows you they don't have enough aces for a slam you retreat back to the agreed suit. Be careful that partner won't take you above the safe level in any reply.

Blackwood should not be used when you have a void because it is impossible to interpret a one ace reply - is that in the suit where you have a void or in one of the others?

So, when is a slam possible? Some bids indicate that a slam is more likely:

- Use of your strongest bid ( $2\clubsuit$ ) showing 23+ points or eight quick tricks
- Use of 2NT showing a balanced hand with 20-22 points
- When opener's bid is strong, shown in their second bid by a jump in a new suit, a jump rebid in the suit that was opened or a jump raise in responder's suit
- When you have a good trump fit, enough aces and shortages
- When one hand has a very long suit facing useful high cards in partner's hand
- A double fit - length in a second suit in addition to trumps

A good technique is to imagine what you need in partner's hand to make a slam and then work out how likely they are to have it. The more perfect partner's hand needs to be then the less likely it is that a slam can be made.

Losing trick count is another useful technique but is too complicated to be described here.