TRIAL BIDS

Wednesday 1\textsuperscript{st} February 2017
Typical way of trying for game

1 ♠ pass 2 ♠

3 ♠ pass ? raise to game with 8-10 HCP
pass with 6-7 HCP

When we bid game, we find it’s unmakeable
When we pass, we make game
Can we do better? Perhaps a trial bid!
BRIDGE IS AN EASY GAME

Iain Macleod
Falcon Press (1952)
(ISBN: 9780584100327)

This was the first book I read on bridge, it has a good explanation of trial bids and Eric Crowhurst refers to it in "Precision Bidding in Acol"
What is a trial bid?

• You’ve opened one of a suit, usually a major
• Your partner has given you a simple raise
• You think there’s a chance of game but you’re weak in a particular 3 or 4-card suit
• You bid it to ask for help (the trial bid)
• It’s forcing so partner must respond
What constitutes a simple raise

- 4-card support (exceptionally three)
- 6 to 9 HCP (sometimes even 10)
- 9 or 10 losers
What are losers?

- a void: 0 losing tricks
- a singleton other than an A: 1 losing trick
- a doubleton A K: 0 losing tricks
- A x or K Q: 1 losing trick
- K x: 1½ losing tricks
- x x: 2 losing tricks
- a 3-card suit A K Q: 0 losing tricks
- A K x: 1 losing trick
Three card suits

- A Q x 1 ½ losing tricks
- K Q x 1½ losing tricks
- A x x 2 losing tricks
- K x x 2 losing tricks
- Q x x 2½ losing tricks
- x x x 3 losing tricks.
- The maximum of losers in a suit is 3
The opening bid is one of a major, why do you think there’s game?

- You usually have a 5-card major (else 4 4 4 1)
- You have 5 or 6 losers overall
- You have 2 losers in the trial suit (3+ cards) e.g. K x x, Q J x
- You have quick tricks elsewhere
What are quick tricks?

- 2 quick tricks = A K of the same suit
- 1½ quick tricks = A Q in the same suit
- 1 quick trick = A
- 1 quick trick = K Q in the same suit
- ½ quick trick = K x (not K singleton)
- not a quick trick = Q J x

that’s a slow trick
Partner’s response

• Maximum HCP and 9 losers – bid game

• Minimum HCP and 10 losers, no help in trial suit – sign off in three of the major

• 9 or 10 losers but not maximum HCP – if you have a void, singleton, Q x, Q J x, K x x or better in the trial suit then bid game
Example of a trial bid

WEST
♠ 7
♥ K Q T 8 6 2
♦ K 8 4
♣ A T 2

EAST
♠ 8 6 5
♥ A 7 5 3
♦ Q J 6 2
♣ 9 5

12 HCP + 2 for length in trumps
6 – losers

7 HCP
9 – losers
help in diamonds
## Rejecting the game try

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEST</th>
<th>EAST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♠ 7</td>
<td>♠ Q J 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♥ K Q T 8 6 2</td>
<td>♥ A 7 5 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ K 8 4</td>
<td>♦ 9 7 6 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♣ A T 2</td>
<td>♣ 9 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 12 HCP + 2 for length in trumps
- 7 HCP

- 6 – losers
- 9 – losers but no help in diamonds
What is your second bid with this hand?

♠ J 7
♥ A Q 8 3
♦ K Q J 4
♣ A J 5

18 HCP
6 losers

WEST  EAST
1 ♥  2 ♥

?
You don’t always make a trial bid, here you can make a limit bid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEST</th>
<th>EAST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♠ J 7</td>
<td>♠ 8 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♥ A Q 8 3</td>
<td>♥ J T 5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ K Q J 4</td>
<td>♦ A 6 3 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♣ A J 5</td>
<td>♣ 9 5 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18 HCP 5 HCP
6 losers 10 losers

WEST EAST
1 ♥ 2 ♥
2 NT 3 ♥

Opener has shown 17-18 HCP.

Return to hearts because of the general weakness.
Let’s change that hand a little

WEST

♠️ A J 7 2
♥️ A Q 8 3
♦️ K Q J 4
♣️ J

18 HCP
5 losers

WEST

1 ♥️

EAST

2 ♥️

?
### Example with a 4-4-4-1 shape

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEST</th>
<th>EAST</th>
<th>WEST</th>
<th>EAST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♠ A J 7 2</td>
<td>♠ K 6</td>
<td>1 ♥</td>
<td>2 ♥</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♥ A Q 8 3</td>
<td>♥ K 9 5 4 2</td>
<td>2 ♠</td>
<td>4 ♥</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ K Q J 4</td>
<td>♦ T 6 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♣ 7</td>
<td>♣ 8 6 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17 HCP | 6 HCP | You have the absolute minimum HCP but a vital spade.

5 losers | 9 losers
9 losers but reluctant to sign off

• You don’t have a good enough fit in the trial suit
• You’re reluctant to sign off since you have another useful holding.
• Make a return trial bid if you can bid it below three of the major.
Reluctant to sign off

Responder

- ♠ A T 3
- ♥ 7 5
- ♦ K T 9 4 3
- ♣ J 9 2

8 HCP
9 losers

1 ♠ 2 ♠
3 ♣ 1 3 ♦ 2

1 trial bid

2 return trial bid, not sure that there’s enough in clubs to justify game
Another return trial bid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEST</th>
<th>EAST</th>
<th>WEST</th>
<th>EAST</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♠ A J 7 2</td>
<td>♠ 8 6 4</td>
<td>1 ♠</td>
<td>2 ♠</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♥ A Q 8 2</td>
<td>♥ K J 5 3</td>
<td>2 ♦</td>
<td>3 ♦</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ K Q J 4</td>
<td>♦ A 6 5</td>
<td>4 ♠</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♣ J</td>
<td>♣ 9 6 5</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No help in spades but a useful diamond holding.

18 HCP  8 HCP  This is a return trial bid
5 losers 10 losers
Opener has both majors

The trial bid is made in the other major

i.e. 1 ♠ 2 ♠ 2 ♠

or 1 ♠ 2 ♠ 3 ♥

If you have 4-card support for the second major, raise this suit if you would have bid game in the first major suit.
Example

WEST
♠ K J 7 3
♥ A J 7 5 2
♦ A K 9
♣ 7

16 HCP
6 losers

EAST
♠ A 8 6 4
♥ Q 9 6 4
♦ Q 7 3
♣ 9 2

8 HCP
9 losers

WEST
1 ♥ 2 ♥ 3 ♠ 4 ♠

EAST
1 trial bid
2 double fit ?
3 oh yes!

Responder’s suit is supported

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEST</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♠ 3</td>
<td>♠ 8 6 5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♥ A J 8 3</td>
<td>♥ K Q 5 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ K J T 4</td>
<td>♦ A 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♣ A 9 5 4</td>
<td>♣ J T 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1♦</td>
<td>pass</td>
<td>1♥</td>
<td>1♠</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2♥</td>
<td>2♠</td>
<td>3♣</td>
<td>1 ♠ pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4♥</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

13 HCP | 10 HCP
7 losers | 8 losers

1 Partner must be short in spades, **trial bid** in clubs because of the diamond Ace doubleton
The opening bid is one of a minor

A trail bid acquires a slightly different meaning.

1 ♣ 2 ♣

2 ♠

The opener’s 2♠ bid is still a trail bid in the sense that it cannot be passed, but the objective is more likely to be 3NT rather than the distant 5♣
Bid 2♠, the best forward-going move available. While you are prepared to play in 5♣ if partner has little to spare, you should investigate other possible game contracts first. If partner signs off in 3♠, make a further try by bidding 3♦. Partner should bid 3NT with good heart stops else 5♣.
Trial bids after a double raise

1 ♠ 3 ♠

4 ♣

In the 80’s this was treated as a slam trial bid holding something like

♠ A K x x x x

♥ 8

♦ A K T

♣ Q J xx

but today it’s usually taken as a cue bid with first round control in ♣ inviting partner to cue bid.
To summarise

• Trial bids are mostly used after a simple raise of a major suit
• They are an alternative to opener inviting game by bidding three of the major
• Opener ‘s major suit is usually 5+ cards and opener shows a 5 or 6 loser hand with two losers in the trial suit
• Trial bids ask for a useful holding in that suit Q x, Q J x or better
• It works because losers disappear from the combined hands e.g. Q x opposite opener’s K x x
There are articles on game try & hand evaluation in Wikipedia.

Now let's play some hands.
Board: 1
Dealer: N
None Vul

♠542
♣A542
♦KQ7
♥AQ1062
♣93
♥K743
♦QJ1086
♣J108

♠A976
♥5
♦A542
♣KQ7

N
W
E
S

14
10
HCP

10
7
9

N 15 3
S 15 3
E 2
W 2
**Board:** 2  
**Dealer:** E  
**NS Vul**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>♠A102</th>
<th>♠43</th>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>♥7</td>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>♦K10853</td>
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<td>S</td>
<td>♣J942</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>N</th>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
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<td>W</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>9</td>
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**North:** 1  
**South:** 1  
**East:** 2 4 43  
**West:** 2 4 43
<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>W</th>
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<td>♠ 753</td>
<td>♠ 7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♥ AK103</td>
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<td>♥ K9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦ 543</td>
<td>♦ 6</td>
<td>♦ J1098</td>
<td>♦ 954</td>
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<tr>
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<td>♣ 1097</td>
<td>♣ 4</td>
<td>♣ A852</td>
<td>♣ 8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Board:** 3  
**Dealer:** S  
**EW Vul**  

**HCP:** 8  
**Total:** 17
Board: 5
Dealer: N
NS Vul

♠1042
♥A843
♦932
♣A43

♠8
♥K9765
♦KQJ10
♣1082

♠KQ73
♥QJ10
♦876
♣J95

N 1 3 1
S 1 3 1
E 2 1
W 2 1

14

HCP

9
Board: 7
Dealer: S
All Vul

♠K872
♥852
♦A3
♣9863

♠J94
♥J743
♦KQ98
♣AJ

♠10
♥KQ109
♦1075
♣107542

♠AQ653
♥A6
♦J642
♣KQ

N 2 4
S 2 4
E 2 1
W 2 1

HCP

7 12 5
16
Board: 8
Dealer: W
None Vul

♠️ 3
♥️ K743
♦️ QJ1086
♣️ J108

♣️ A54
♥️ 52
♠️ KQ7

♠️ AJ976
♥️ N
♣️ W

14 7
HCP
9

♣️ S
♠️ E
♥️ W
♠️ N

N 11
S 21
E 24 2
W 24 2

7 14 10