

Getting to Game

As we now know, we use the point count to evaluate our hands and if we have more 12 – 21 points and an unbalanced hand we open 1 major if we have 5 and our longest minor if we don't. To bid again we need to know where we are trying to get to in the bidding. What is our aim?

To do that we have to understand more about the scoring in bridge.

Scoring When You Make Your Contract

- Trick score for each trick taken over 6
- ♣ and ♦ contracts – 20 points per trick
- ♥ and ♠ contracts – 30 points per trick
- NT contracts – 40 points for 1st trick; 30 points per trick thereafter.

As well as this you get a bonus of 50 for a part score, 250 for a game score – not vulnerable and 450 – vulnerable and even more if you bid a small slam (contracting to make 12 tricks) or a grand slam (contracting to make all 13 tricks).

A Game contract depends on the denomination. If you bid 3NT (9 tricks, 6+3) and make you will get the game bonus but to get the same bonus in a major requires you to bid and make 10 Tricks. This is because it is easier to make a suit contract because of the ability to trump. In the minor suits, you need to bid and take 11 tricks to get the bonus. Consider the following scores;

Bidding and Making	Score
1♣ (7 tricks)	70
1♥ (7 tricks)	80
1 NT	90
3♠ (9 tricks)	140
3NT (9 tricks)	400 not vulnerable and 600 Vulnerable
4♠ (10 tricks)	420 not vulnerable and 620 Vulnerable
5♦ (11 tricks)	400 not vulnerable and 600 Vulnerable

You can see from this table the sweet spot is the majors and this is why our bidding system is designed around the major suits. It is also clear that we would like to get that game bonus if at all possible.

It turns out that the Point Count can help us here too. If the two hand combined add up to the magic 25 **TP** we should be able to make game in NT and the majors and 29 points in the minors – because we have to take an extra trick.

Please Note that in NT shortages are not useful as there are no trumps so only count for shortages after you have agreed the suit

This brings us to the second round of bidding. The first round is designed to find our fit in a major. The second is to establish if we can get that game bonus.

Responses to 1 of a Major



When partner opens a major he really wants to see if you have a fit. Responder's first responsibility is to agree the fit. The opening bid of 1♠ or 1♥ promises 5 in that suit therefore if responder has more than 3 he has a fit.

When a fit is found then shortages are valuable, particularly in the hand with the fewest trumps. If responder is void in Diamonds then he can trump and regain control. Declarer can do this as well but he is trumping with a card that will win anyway.

Declarer will have 5 spades if he has opened and if responder has a minimum fit they will have 8 trumps leaving 5 for the opposition. If the trumps break 3-2 (most commonly) then the two remaining spades will be the top 2 cards in the pack and cannot lose.




It is usual to add points to your HCP.



Add 5 for a void
3 for a singleton and
1 for doubleton.

Thus, after a 1  opening responder should bid 2 





With the following;

 - T653
 - K653
 - void
 - T9876.

Clearly with a minimum hand responder will want to warn partner not to get too enthusiastic. He would still show the fit and bid 2  with 6-9 HCP + Distribution Points = Total Points (TP). With a slightly stronger hand say, 10 -11 TP responder would jump a level and bid 3 . This is called an invitational hand because it invites opener to bid to game (4 ) if he is more than 15 TP's. The combined points for the partnership would be greater than 25. Opener has 15 and responder has 10 =25.

To make 4 / or 3NT the *partnership* needs the "Magic 25". To make Game in the minors you need about 29 TP's.

Please note this magic 25 works more than 50% of the time but don't be disappointed if your contract goes down. They do!!

You would expect that with 13+ points responder should bid directly to 4 / and you can play it this way but there is a better way. Responder should bid another suit (**not** NT) and then at his next turn bid 4 /. More on this later