

Major Suit Game Tries

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We will discuss the following auctions (without competitive bids by the opponents): **A) 1M – 2M B) 1m – 1M – 2 Same Major C) 1NT – 2D or 2H transfer bid.**

In standard style Bridge if you wanted to try for game you would typically raise the trump suit to the 3-level or just gamble and jump to game. Major suit game tries are a way of exchanging information so that partner can help in making the right decision. Note: “M” means a major suit and “m” is a minor suit.

For an example, say you hold \spadesuit AKJ932 \heartsuit K102 \diamondsuit K43 \clubsuit 2. If you make a game try of 3^\spadesuit after partner raises your 1^\spadesuit opener, partner, holding \spadesuit 8xx, \heartsuit QJ43, \diamondsuit AJ6 \clubsuit 9843 has near the top of a raise and will probably go to game. You are almost certain to make 4 and will often make 5^\spadesuit . But, say partner holds \spadesuit 8xx, \heartsuit 10862, \diamondsuit AJ6 \clubsuit QJ43. Now, even though responder again has 8 points, you may not even make 3^\spadesuit . ***So what we need is a way to tell partner where we need her points to be to have a good play for game.***

A) Game Tries After 1M – 2M

You open 1H or 1S and your partner raises the suit to the 2 level. Say you hold ♠AJ10xxx, ♥Q10x, ♦x, ♣AQx. Despite having only 13 HCP, you have a 5 ½ or 6 loser count so, if partner's points are in the right place, you could easily make game. If partner has many wasted points in diamonds (a bad holding would be something like ♦KJx or ♦QJx) game might not be a good proposition. Showing partner where you don't want his points to be solves this problem.

Short Suit Game Tries (SSGT): After the auction 1M – 2M any non-jump new suit is a game-try in the agreed major showing a singleton in the suit bid (and should be alerted). Responder discounts all points in that suit except the A and go on to game or stop at 3M based on the re-evaluated points. Responder should assume opener has a 5 ½ or 6 loser hand and generally about 15 to a bad 18 high card points. Opener may have fewer points if very good distribution (say a 2 suiter with 5-5 or 6-4).

Example: OPENER: ♠AK1093 ♥KJ2 ♦AJ73 ♣2

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♠
3♣	?

Responder's rebids:

- a. ♠Q86 ♥Q943 ♦K4 ♣J1094 -Bid 4♠, your red suit honors are good.
- b. ♠QJ4 ♥Q843 ♦876 ♣KJ6 -Bid 3♠, your clubs are not working and you haven't enough in the red suits.
- c. ♠8742 ♥Q7 ♦Q108 ♣A1093 -Bid 4♠, your club ace is working and you have red suit honors and an extra trump.

Help Suit Game Tries (HSGT)

There are many hands where you either haven't got a singleton or you have another suit you would like partner to have a good holding in. Playing HSGT, your new suit bid after a mayor raise is not a singleton – it is a message to partner to look at his holding in that suit and decide whether to bid game or sign off at the 3 level.

1. Opener: ♠AQ1054 ♥8 ♦AK65 ♣K98

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♠
3♣	?

Now let's look at what responder should do:

- a. ♠K98 ♥10964 ♦J103 ♣A103 - Bid 4♠, your club holding is great.

b. ♠K98 ♥K109 ♦J874 ♣743 - Bid 3♠, your club holding is terrible.

c. ♠K98 ♥KQ1072 ♦84 ♣764 - Bid 3♥, this is sometimes called a “waffle” and says my clubs are not good but I have good values elsewhere. If partner bids 3♠ you will pass.

2. Opener: ♠87 ♥A109765 ♦AJ94 ♣A

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♥
3♦	?

a. ♠10932 ♥KJ3 ♦KQ32 ♣98 -Bid 4♥, this is easy.

b. ♠Q103 ♥K82 ♦876 ♣QJ87 -Bid 3♥, you have no diamond help.

c. ♠A109 ♥KQ32 ♦87 ♣10943 -Bid 4♥, your 4th trump is a great asset and you only have 2 possible diamond losers.

3. Opener : ♠A943 ♥AQ964 ♦A ♣AK8

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♥
2♠	

Here opener is using the 2[♠] *HSGT* as a slam try, intending to just bid game if partner only bids 3[♥].

So, now we have a choice of playing *SSGT* or *HSGT* and, for a simple bidding improvement, you and your partner can choose 1 of these. But it is possible, though slightly more complicated, to play both *SSGT* and *HSGT* at the same time.

How to Play *SSGT* and *HSGT* at the Same Time

After 1S – 2S, a new suit bid on the 3 level is a *HSGT*. A bid of 2NT (alert) forces partner to bid 3[♣] and then you bid your *SSGT* suit (alert) (if it is clubs, you bid 3[♠]).

After 1H – 2H, 2NT (alert) is a spade *HSGT* and 3[♣] and 3[♦] are natural *HSGT*. 2[♠] (alert) forces 2NT and then you bid your (alert) *SSGT* (with 3[♥] showing a short spade).

Finally, since we no longer need 1M – 2M – 3M as a general game try we can use it as a semi-pre-emptive raise or we can use it as a long, very weak, trump suit with lots of outside strength, say something like [♠]!09xxxx, [♥]Ax, [♦]AKxx, [♣]AJ. Partnerships should decide which option to choose.

B) *SPIRAL* after the auction 1m – 1M – 2M (Same Major)

We all have held hands like. ♠A109 ♥7 ♦KQ86 ♣AJ542 and opened 1♣ and partner said 1♠. We can't bid 1NT and have too nice a spade hand to rebid 2 clubs (the same would be true if we had opened 1♦). So, we bid 2♠ even though we only have 3 card support. In fact, if we had 2 small hearts instead of 1, we would still want to bid 2♠.

If you and your partner agree that your style is to commonly raise on 3 card support, it is great to have a convention to sort out what kind of raise you have.

SPIRAL (Simple Limited Meckwell Version)

After 1m – 1M – 2M, responder holding an invitational hand or better hand asks about opener's hand with a bid of 2NT.

Opener's responses: 4 steps: 3♣ = 3-trump min (roughly 11-13 HCP), 3♦ = 3 trump max (roughly 14 to 16 HCP), 3♥ = 4 - min, 3♠ = 4 - max.

After opener shows '4', responder can offer 3N when balanced.

After a 3 - min, responder can probe for 3N with a new suit, or signoff in 3M.

After a 3 - max, all of responders bids probe for 3N

Example

Opener: ♠A74 ♥AQ64 ♦73 ♣KJ95

Responder: ♠K8 ♥KJ105 ♦K87 ♣10432

The auction would go 1♣ - 1♥ - 2♥ - 2NT - 3♠ - 4♥

C) 1NT – 2D or 2H Transfer Bid (Followed by *Super Accept*)

After you open 1NT and partner transfers to a major and you have great 4+ card support and a max NT hand – you can show this by a ***Super Accept*** bid. There are variations, but here is a simple version: bid 3 of a suit other than the transfer suit (or 2♠ after an attempt to transfer to 2♥). This shows 4 card support, a max NT and a doubleton in the suit bid. Bid 2NT with a flat hand that has 4-card support and is a max NT opener. Finally, bid 3 of the transfer suit with a max and 5-card support.

Comments

It is easiest to play *HSGT* as it is closer to natural bidding and later add *SSGT* as well.

There are other versions of these conventions – the simplest, but very useful ones, were shown here

When accepting partner's game try, if you have a side suit cue bid you can show on the way to game, it might help partner if she was thinking about slam and always going to game.

It is possible to play some of these conventions in competitive auctions when all the appropriate response bids are still available. That is something a partnership should agree on. Remember, if the opponents bid a suit you always have the cue-bid available for game tries, as well.

When raising responders 1M with only 3-card support you may often find yourself in a 4-3 major fit at the 2-level. This (Moysian) fit is, more often than not, a very good duplicate contract and should not be feared.