

Slam Bidding

What is Needed to Make Slam?

- ◆ Hand evaluation: Not covered in this lecture
 - Suggest you use a combination of high card points and loser count to determine whether you should look for slam
- ◆ Fewer than 2 quick losers (i.e. losers you can't get rid of)
- ◆ A way to win 12 (or 13) tricks (without losing 2 (or 1) tricks in the process)
 - High cards
 - Ruffing
 - Long suit

- ◆ When should I bid NT with a known suit fit?
 - When you don't think you need ruffs to make the contract AND you either don't have to lose a trick to set up your tricks or you are double stopped in all suits

- ◆ When should I bid a grand slam?
 - When you can confidently count 13 tricks

Tools for Exploring for Slam:

Ace or Keycard asking bids

- ◆ See Leonard's lecture notes in June, 2014 for list
 - (RKC, Gerber, Exclusion, Minorwood, Kickback, Mini-RKC)

- ◆ Agreements necessary
 - Initial responses
 - E.g. for Roman Keycard: 3014 vs. 1430
 - Void-showing (must be potentially useful void – usually not in partner's bid side suit)
 - Are responses the same for NT auctions (e.g. 1N-4C if you play Gerber)?
 - Does K ask guarantee all key cards? (recommend yes)
 - Do you respond number of kings or specific kings? (recommend specific – Hand A)
 - Can you bid a grand slam over K ask if extra source of tricks? (recommend yes)
 - For Roman-type responses, does Q ask guarantee all keycards? (recommend no)
 - What do you skip for "next step" Q ask (agreed suit and maybe NT)
 - Can you show the Q when you have extra length (but no Q)? (recommend yes)
 - How do you handle interference (& does it differ based on level of interference)?
 - For keycard responses: What is key suit if not obvious (recommend last bid suit)

- ◆ When is “asking bid”, not really asking? For example, if you play Gerber:
 - Usually only Gerber after a jump over NT or on pre-discussed specific auctions, such as:
 - Directly after a weak 2 bid
 - In Stayman auctions (1N-2C; 2x-4C) so 4N can be quantitative. If response is a major, suggest 4C be “keycard” Gerber (if you normally play keycard asks)
 - When it can’t be anything else (natural, splinter, etc.)

- ◆ When should you use these bids?
 - When the answer to the ace/keycard-asking question(s) tells you all you need to know to bid slam (Hand B)

- ◆ When should you not use these bids?
 - Generically, when you don’t know what to do after any possible response
 - When you have a side suit with 2 quick losers or worse (e.g. xx or Qxx) (Hand C)
 - Note: you can use RKC after your unprotected suit has been control bid
 - When the response can get you too high (e.g. you’re in hearts & 2 keycards + queen (5S response in standard RKC) is not enough for slam) (Hand D)
 - When you have a void (unless you are bidding Exclusion) (Hand E)

Control bids

- ◆ **Control card bidding (is often called cue bidding)**
 - Usually a control bid occurs when:
 - You are on a game force or accepting a game invitation
 - It is above 3 of your agreed major (new suits below that are usually game tries)
 - It is above 3N if your agreed suit is a minor (new suits below that are usually NT probes)
 - It is not a jump (jumps are usually splinters)
 - It is a bid in a suit showing a control in that suit
 - 1st round control is A or void
 - 2nd round control is K or singleton
 - You cannot control bid in trumps
 - A control bid in a suit in which you have previously splintered promises a void or a singleton A (i.e. a 1st round control)
 - Use when:
 - Ace or keycard asking bids are inappropriate (see above) (Hands C & E)
 - To keep the bidding low or find key control prior to possible keycard asking (Hand F)
 - Especially when you’re afraid to go past game if partner has no controls

Note: if partner starts control bidding, it is useful to think about why (s)he might be control bidding instead of asking for keycards (Hand G)

- Agreements needed:
 - Are you required to show a control (if you have one) in response to partner's control bid or can you retreat to your suit with a minimum?
 - Do you bid controls up the line (i.e. cheapest 1st so that skipping a suit denies a control in that suit (in the context of which controls you choose to show – see next bullet))
 - What controls do you show?
 - 1st round controls only?
 - 1st round controls first & 2nd round controls only when first round control has been promised or denied? (recommend)
 - 1st or 2nd round controls up the line (regardless of whether 1st or 2nd)?
 - Does this answer change if the control is being bid by partner of a 2♣ opener?

- ◆ **“Courtesy” control bids (Hand H)**
 - If you are accepting a game try by partner, control bid on the way (at 4-level – 3-level is usually a “waffle”). This will help partner if the control is just what partner needs for exploring slam or the game-try is really trying to find out if it is worth exploring for slam.

- ◆ **Frivolous 3N or Serious 3N (one or the other) – advanced treatments**
 - Distinguishes between “courtesy” control bids and real slam tries
 - If it is “courtesy” you control bid in return only if you are interested in slam
 - If it is a real slam try, you must control bid in return if you have a control
 - Downside: you cannot play 3N once you have a confirmed major suit fit
 - Occur when you have an agreed upon major, 3N is available to bid & at least one hand is unlimited.
 - How they work:
 - Assume auction goes: 1♠-2♥; 3♥- [3N or “New” suit: suit other than hearts > or 4♥]
 - If you play frivolous 3N:
 - 3N: I have no interest in slam, but I have a control to bid if you're interested
 - “New” suit: I am interested in slam & have a control in this suit; bid your cheapest control if you have one
 - 4♥: I have no controls
 - If you play serious 3N:
 - 3N: I am interested in slam; bid your cheapest control if you have one
 - “New” suit: have no interest in slam, but I have a control in this suit
 - 4♥: I have no controls

◆ Last train – an advanced treatment

- Invented by Jeff Meckstroth, named after Monkee’s song “Last Train to Clarksville”
- Bridge World definition: “Any time there is only one call that indicates slam interest or further slam interest without raising the partnership’s level of commitment, it is a Last Train slam-try, unrelated to the strain named (unless followed by an uninvited further action).”
- Translation: The bid directly below game in your agreed suit is a non-specific control bid or a mild slam try. It’s either a control in the suit bid or a control that you can’t show without bidding beyond game or just a mild slam try.
 - Example: 1♠ -4♦ (splinter); 4♥ (4♥ is a mild slam try with a control somewhere, not necessarily hearts)

5-Level bid of an agreed major

When bid voluntarily (i.e. not just forced by competitive bidding):

- ◆ If only 1 unbid suit in which a control has not already been shown, asks for 1st or 2nd round control in that suit
 - Example: 1♠ -4♦ (splinter); 4♥ (control)-4♠ (not interested); 5♠ (bid slam with 1st or 2nd round club control)
- ◆ If opponents have bid a suit in which a control has not already been shown, asks for 1st or 2nd round control in that suit
 - Example: 1♥ – (3♦) - 5♥ holding ♠x, ♥AK10x, ♦Jx, ♣AKJxxxx
 - Pass without 1st or 2nd round control of diamonds
 - Bid 6♥ with singleton diamond or protected K with no interest in NT
 - Bid 5N with a protected K to suggest 6N rather than 6♥
 - Bid 6♦ with 1st round control (A or void) to let partner know 7♥ is possible (obviously, if the suit is above 6 of your suit, you can’t do this)
- ◆ If none of the above applies, asks for good trump
 - Example: 1♥-2N (Jacoby); 3♠ (0 or 1♠); 4♥ (not interested)- 5♥ great hand, but my hearts are bad (say ♠--, ♥J9xxx, ♦AKQx, ♣AQxx). Go to slam with good hearts.
Note: RKC won’t help (void) nor will Exclusion (5♠ is too high) nor will control bidding as partner has no possible 1st round control other than spades (5♠) which doesn’t help and will commit us to slam.
 - Example: 3♥- 5♥ (I have a monster outside of hearts, bid slam with 1-loser suit), say ♠A10xx, ♥x, ♦AKQx, ♣AKxx
- ◆ Beware: if your side has preempted & opponents have acted, this is a just a preempt – not an asking bid (e.g. (1♦)-3♥- (P)- 5♥ (you think they might have a spade fit, for example)

5NT

When neither a king-ask nor a signoff after a Gerber-type auction:

- ◆ **Quantitative;** When directly after a NT bid by partner: asks partner to go to 7N if at the top of the range, otherwise bid 6N (this is forcing to slam)
 - Pavlicek: *If you get these hands a lot, I recommend you play money bridge for big bucks*

- ◆ **Grand Slam Force (GSF) – extremely rare if you’re playing RKC**
 - Asks partner to bid a grand slam with 2 of the top 3 honors in the agreed or last bid suit
 - You can bid 7 of agreed or last bid suit or always bid 7♣ just in case partner needed to know about honors in that suit to bid a grand slam in another suit
 - Without 2 of the top 3 honors, the simplest option is to bid 6 of the agreed suit
 - A more complicated option without 2 of the top 3, depending on the room available below 6 of your suit:
 - 1st step: Q or at least 10 card fit
 - 2nd step: A or K
 - 3rd step: A or K and at least 10 card fit
 - Agreements needed:
 - Which steps get lost as you lose room
 - You can reverse the 1st and 2nd steps
 - Playing RKC, this is most useful when you only need to know about honors in the agreed suit and:
 - You have a void, but either don’t play Exclusion Blackwood or don’t want to bid Exclusion for some reason (usually because it’s too high)
 - You have cue bid above 4N (so RKC isn’t available)

- ◆ **Pick a slam – a modern treatment**

Note: If you play both GSF and pick-a-slam, you need a clear agreement about when 5N is GSF and when it is pick-a-slam (recommend either a simple, unambiguous rule or drop GSF completely)

 - Most often used when you know you want to be in a small slam, but don’t know where
 - Can also be used when you have a known fit, but think there might be a better choice (either NT or a second suit fit)
 - Asks partner to bid a slam, in the best strain based on the choices available from the implications of the auction. You should usually respond with:
 - A suit of your own that is longer/stronger than already shown
 - Stronger support for a suit partner has bid than you have already shown
 - An unbid side suit of your own
 - NT if you are exceptionally NT oriented or NT is one of the clear choices

- Your response to 5N may not be the “final” word. If you bid a new suit of your own, partner can correct without support for that suit (i.e. this is a negotiation, not a fiat)
- Some examples (all assume the 5N bidder has enough strength to force slam):
 - 2N-3♣ (stayman); 3♥-5N: I have 4 spades – bid 6♠ or 6N
 - 1N-2♦ (transfer); 2♥-5N: I have 5 hearts – bid 6♥ or 6N
 - 1N-2♣ (stayman); 2♦ (no major)-5N: I have at least one minor – bid 6 of your cheapest minor and I’ll pass or correct to 6N
 - 1♠-(5♣)-5N: I have a monster with both red suits
 - 1♣-1♠; 3♣-3♦; 3N-4N: 5N: Bid 6♣ or 6N
 - 1♦-2♣; 2N-5N: We might belong in 6♣ or 6♦ or 6N

4N

When neither an ace/keycard-ask nor a signoff after a Gerber-type auction:

- ♦ **Quantitative:** It is a quantitative slam invitation when directly after a NT bid by partner: asks partner to go to slam if at the top of the range (suggest you respond keycard if accepting – just in case you’re off 2 of them):
 - 1N-4N
 - 1♦-1♠; 1N-4N
 - 2N-3♣; 3♥-4N: I have 4 spades & a slam invitation
 - 1♥-2♦; 3♣-3N; 4N
- ♦ **To Play:** It is to play when:
 - Original NT bidder retreats to 4N after suit bids by partner
 - 2N-3♣; 3♠-4♦; 4N: I have no fit for you and am not interested in slam
 - No fit and you’re at the 4 level (usually happens when there is competition)
 - 1♠-(3♥)-4♣-(P); 4N
 - After a Gerber auction (e.g. 1N-4♣; 4x-4N)
 - Responder to Gerber should bid slam if using Roman responses & have the upper end (i.e. if you showed 1 or 4 and you actually have 4)
- ♦ **Takeout:** It is takeout when it cannot be natural based on the opponents’ bidding:
 - Asks partner to pick a minor (similar to an Unusual NT) or shows 2 places to play and asks partner to bid the lowest suit (s)he can tolerate (need partnership agreements)
 - (1♠)-P-(3♠ – game invitational)-4N
 - This is usually looking for a good sacrifice

Hands for Slam Tools Lecture

Hand A: The argument for specific kings

- ♠ AQxxxx Partner opens 1♥: 1♥-1♠; 3♠ -4N (RKC); 5x (0-3 keycards)... At this point you know:
♥ Kx - Partner has: At least ♠Kxxx; at least ♥Axxxx and the A♣
♦ AQJx - So your only possible loser is a diamond (10 spades with ♠AKQ, ♥AK, ♣A)
♣ x You want to bid 7N if partner has the ♦K so you ask for kings (5N)

If you play number of kings and partner shows 0 or 2, you know what to do (6S & 7N respectively), but if partner shows 1, you don't know what to do...the ♣K is worthless to you, but the ♦K is golden.

If you play specific kings, you know exactly what to do (if response is ♣6, you can bid ♦6 to ask for ♦K).

Hand B: A perfect hand for Ace/Keycard asking

- ♠ x You open 1♥ and partner makes a 4-card limit raise in hearts (however you do that).
♥ AQJxx - All you need to know to place the contract at the proper level (5, 6 or 7) is how many
♦ KQJx keycards partner has; just bid 4N (note that 0 keycards is impossible – there are only 7
♣ KQx non-key HCP available)

Hand C: Unprotected suit

- ♠ AKxxxx You open 1♠: 1♠ -3N (3 spades, flat, GF)
♥ x - You are clearly in slam range
♦ AK109 - If you ask for keycards, you won't know what to do if partner shows 1 keycard:
♣ xx If it's the ♣A, slam is a good bet, but the ♥A you might have 2 club losers

Control bidding: after 3N, bid 4♦ then if partner bids:

- 4♥: Sign off in 4♠. Partner will get the message that you're worried about clubs and continue with a club stopper.
- 4♠: Pass
- 5♣: You have good chances for slam – bid 6♠

Hand D: Response can get you too high

- ♠ AQ Partner opens 2♣: 2♣ -2♦ (GF); 2♥
♥ J10xx - You are clearly in slam range
♦ x - If you ask for keycards, and partner shows 2 with the Q (5♠), you are in trouble if
♣ KQxxxx partner has the ♥AKQ and neither minor ace.
Suggest that on this hand you bid 3♥ showing extras and let partner take control

Hand E: Void

- ♠ AKxxxx You open 1♠: 1♠ – “3 card limit raise” (call it 3♠)
♥ KQJx - You are clearly in slam range
♦ Kxx - If you ask for keycards, and partner shows 1 or 2, you don't know what to do. The ♣A
♣ --- is mostly useless (it can provide a discard), but the red aces are valuable.

Control bidding: after 3♠, bid 4♣ (1st round control of clubs) then if partner bids:

- 4♦: Bid RKC (see note below): Bid 6♠ if 2 aces or 1 ace + ♠Q, else sign off in 5♠
- 4♥: Bid RKC (see note below): Will show 1 ace; ask for ♠Q: yes bid 6♠, no bid 5♠
- 4♠: Pass
- 5♣: This should be 2nd round control of clubs since you showed 1st round control. Bid 5♠. The ♣K is useless.

NOTE: When you show 1st round control in clubs, if partner is looking at the ♣A, he will know that you are void and NOT count the ♣A in response to RKC. If he's not looking at it, he certainly won't count it, so the response to 4N will never include the worthless ♣A. *As responder, be aware of this and exclude the ace in partner's void.*

Hand F: Control bidding followed by RKC

- ♠ AKxxx You open 1♠: 1♠ -3♠ (Limit)
♥ x - You are clearly in slam range
♦ xx - If you ask for keycards, and partner shows 1, you don't know what to do. You want
♣ AKQJx to be in 6 if partner has the ♦A, but the ♥A leaves you with 2 possible diamond losers.

Control bidding: after 3♠, bid 4♣ (1st round control of clubs) then if partner bids:

- 4♦: Bid 4N: if partner has both aces and the Q♠, bid 7♠
- 4♥: Bid 4♠ – partner will get the message and bid slam with a sure diamond stopper (♦KQ) and maybe with just ♦Kx if feeling brave (should be 50%)
- 4♠: Pass

Hand G: Hand 21 from Regional on Tuesday afternoon – control bidding

- ♠ AKxxx Paul opened 1♠: 1♠ -3♦ (3 card limit):
♥ xx - Paul (the optimist) thinks: I'm worth a mild slam try. We have slam if partner has
♦ KJ9xx the perfect hand. With an unprotected suit, I have to bid controls.
♣ A **Auction continued:** 4♣- 4♦; 4♠-6♠ (he's worried about hearts – I'm not!)
I held: ♠109x, ♥AK, ♦ Axx, ♣ 1098xx. The ♦Q was onsite...life is good.

Hand H: Courtesy control bid

- ♠ AQxx Partner opens 1♦: 1♦ -1♠; 3♠-4♦ (I'm not interested in slam, but maybe partner is if my
♥ xxx A♦ fills a hole)
♦ Ax
♣ xxxx Partner could have something like: ♠ Kxxx, ♥ x, ♦ KQJxxx, ♣ Axx

Hand I: Frivolous 3N

- ♠ Jx Partner opens 1♠: 1♠ -2♥ (GF): 3♥ (extras – unlimited) – 3N (no interest but a control)
♥ KQxxx - Opener should control bid (or RKC) only if interested in exploring opposite a minimum.
♦ Axx By contrast, 4♦ instead of 3N would have shown a hand with slam interest and
♣ QJx demanded a control bid from opener (if possible).