

Trial Bids in the Majors



Trial bids are used when you open one of a major suit with a hand that typically has 15-17 HCP and five cards in the major and 6 losers, and are immediately raised to two of that suit by your partner, showing 6-9 points, i.e. 9 losers and a match for your suit. (You need **five** cards in your major because partner may have raised your suit with just three card support.)

If you make a simple rebid of your major and partner has less than the maximum number of points, they are likely to pass, even though you might well make game if they hold 7-8 points and with a good fit in other suits.

On the surface there are 15 losers between the two hands, too many losers for game in the major to have good prospects ($18 - 15 = 9$ tricks). But if most of responder's losers are in suits where opener has strength, and if most of opener's losers are in suits where responder has strength, then a game contract becomes much more likely to succeed.

A 'Trial Bid' is a length-showing bid in opener's weak suit which allows the partnership to assess whether holdings in the trial suit will positively affect the side's trick-taking potential. A player making a trial bid will have at least three cards in the suit bid and his partner will be expected to evaluate his holding in this suit for the purposes of bidding towards game.

By making a trial bid opener aims to find out whether partner can stop the opponents from running off three tricks in the trial suit from the start of play.

Responder should count his losers in the trial bid suit and then act as follows:

Losers	Action
<u>0 or 1</u>	Bid game even with minimum points as the hands fit well.
<u>2</u>	Bid game with maximum points (8+) otherwise sign off at the three level.
<u>3</u>	Sign off at the 3-level even with maximum points - the hands don't fit well.

The only doubtful area is with exactly two losers – sign off if min. - bid game if max.

- Less than 2 trial suit losers – bid game anywhere in the 6-9 point range.
- More than 2 trial suit losers – sign off anywhere in the 6-9 point range.
- Exactly 2 trial suit losers – bid game with 8-9 HCP; sign off with 6-7 points.

West	East	West	East
♠ 4	♠ K Q 7 5	1♥	2♥
♥ A K J 9 4	♥ Q 7 6 2	3♣	3♥
♦ A K 5 2	♦ J 6		
♣ J 4 3	♣ 9 6 2		

East has the maximum points for our original 6-9 point response but with three losers in the trial bid suit (clubs) he signs off in 3♥.

West	East	West	East
♠ 4	♠ 9 6 2	1♥	2♥
♥ A K J 9 4	♥ 10 7 6 2	3♣	4♥
♦ A K 5 2	♦ 7 6		
♣ J 4 3	♣ A Q 7 5		

This time, although East is at the bottom end of his original 6-9 point response, he has only one loser in the trial bid suit (clubs) so he is happy to bid 4♥.

West	East	West	East
♠ A 9 8 5 4 3	♠ K J 7 2	1♠	2♠
♥ A 5	♥ 7 6 2	3♣	4♠
♦ A Q	♦ 8 6 3		
♣ J 4 3	♣ A 10 9		

East has the near maximum points for his original 6-9 point response and has good trump support, so with just two losers in the trial bid suit (clubs) he is happy to bid 4♠.

Summary

- Trial bids are used after a major suit has been agreed at the two level.
- Use with hands that are suitable for a game invitation (6 losers) and have a weak 3+ card suit
- Make a trial bid in the suit with most losers. With two poor suits, pick the weaker one (the one with more losers). If both have same number of losers, pick the cheaper suit.
- With poor trumps and good side suits, sign off in three of the agreed suit rather than trial bid.