

Lesson 11 – Bidding Slams

Quantitative 4NT Slam Invitation

Statistically a 6NT slam is worth going for with 33+ HCP. 7NT requires 37+ HCP. The probability of making a small slam with exactly 33 HCP is around 50%, and the probability of making a grand slam with exactly 37 HCP is 75%.

1NT - 4NT - ?; 2NT - 4NT - ?; 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT - 4NT - ?; all are examples of a quantitative slam enquiry. No suit has been agreed so the contract will end up in No Trumps.

The No Trump bidder's partner needs to do the maths before making a quantitative bid. He adds his HCP to partner's maximum point count to calculate the maximum combined point count, and then acts as follows:

- 4NT invites slam.
 - If combined strength is known to be less than 33 HCP, pass (stop in 4NT)
 - If combined strength is known to be between 33 HCP and 36 HCP, bid 6NT.
 - If combined strength is known to be 37+ HCP, bid 7NT.
- Bid 6NT direct if you know the partnership has 33+ HCP;
- Bid 7NT if you know that the partnership has at least 37 HCP.
- 5NT is a grand slam enquiry – bidder knows the partnership has at least 35 HCP so 6NT is almost guaranteed and 7NT is possible if opener is maximum.
 - If combined strength is known to be less than 37 HCP, bid 6NT
 - If combined strength is 37+ HCP, bid 7NT.

For example:

- After a weak 1NT bid (12-14), if responder has 19 HCP the combined strength is 31-33 HCP so responder bids 4NT invitational to 6NT
- After a 2NT bid (20-22), if responder has 12 HCP the combined maximum is 32 -34 HCP so responder bids 4NT invitational to 6NT
- After a 2♣-2♦-2NT (23-24 HCP), if responder has 12 HCP the combined maximum is 35-37 HCP so responder bids 5NT invitational to 7NT

Responding to a Quantitative Slam Invitation

Opener has a relatively simple decision to make. If maximum for their NT bid they accept the invitation. If minimum they pass. If they are in the middle of their range (e.g. 13 HCP or 21 HCP) then they usually mentally down grade it to a minimum and pass, but sometimes the hand may be worth an upgrade, in which case opener should accept the invitation. For example: ♠ A 2 ♥ Q J 3 ♦ Q J 10 9 2 ♣ Q J 8 . This hand has only 13 HCP but the lovely 5 card diamond suit and the Q J combinations are valuable features that warrant an upgrade

Blackwood 4NT

When the opening bid is in a suit, the combined point count range is usually revealed as the auction progresses. If an 8+ card fit is found, a small slam in the suit can often be made with fewer than 33 HCP. Shortage in side suits offer ruffing potential, so shortage points can be counted. 4NT (when preceded by a suit bid, not by notrumps) asks partner how many aces they possess.

Responses to 4NT

5♣	0 or 4 aces
5♦	1 ace
5♥	2 aces
5♠	3 aces

Examples

1. WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
♠ A K Q 10 7 6 3 2	♠ J 5		1 ♥
♥ A	♥ K Q 7 4 2	1 ♠	3 ♦
♦ 5 3	♦ K Q J 2	4 NT	5 ♦ (1 Ace)
♣ J 4	♣ A K	6 ♠	

- East 's jump to 3♦ shows 19+ HCP This is enough for West to investigate slam.
- West knows spades will be trumps and bids 4NT to check they are not missing 2 aces.
- West bids the 6♠ slam.

2. WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
♠ K 8	♠ A Q 7 5 4		1 ♠
♥ A Q 4 3 2 ♠	♥ K J 8 7	2 ♥	3 ♥
♦ K J 10	♦ Q 3	4 NT	5 ♦ (1 ace)
♣ K Q J	♣ 4 3	5 ♥	

- Since East has opened the bidding, West can count a minimum of 31 combined HCP.
- West knows they have a heart fit and will bid slam unless they are missing 2 aces.
- Sadly, they are missing 2 aces, so they stop in 5♥

Is 4NT Quantitative or Blackwood?

Quantitative 4NT: When the immediately preceding bid is in No Trumps

Blackwood 4NT: When the immediately preceding bid is in a suit