When do you bid Game?
Provided by Neil H. Timm

When do you bid game at the bridge table? Let's look at the expected value of your bridge decision on whether or not to bid 4♠ or 3♠. Are you going to make ten tricks or nine tricks?

We assume that the probability or each outcome is equally likely or ½; yes, whether or not you win or lose a finesse. And let's assume you are vulnerable.

The possible outcomes are 620, -100 for bidding four and 170 and 140 for bidding three.

The Expected value for bidding 4♠ = 0.5 X 620 + 0.5 X (-100) = 310-50 = 260.

The Expected value for bidding 3♠ = 0.5 X 170 + 0.5 X 140 = 85+70 =155.

Thus, if you have a 50-50 chance of making 10 tricks, it is best to bid game.

Let's reduce the likelihood to 40%. Now what are the expected values?

The Expected value for bidding 4♠ = 0.4 X 620 + 0.6 X (-100) = 248 -60 = 188.

The Expected value for bidding 3♠ = 0.4 X 170 + 0.6 X 140 = 68+ 84 = 152.

Thus, even with a 40% chance as opposed to a 50% chance, it is better to bid game!

Why not next try 35%.

The Expected value for bidding 4♠ = 0.35 X 620 + 0.66 X (-100) = 217+ 65 = 152.

The Expected value for bidding 3♠ = 0.35 X 170 + 0.65X 140 = 59.5 + 91 = 150.5.

Thus, you still want to bid game, but only marginally.

Finally, let's try 33%; now the expected values are 137.5 for bidding game and 149.9 for bidding only three. With a likelihood of 1/3, YOU SHOULD NO LONGER BID GAME!

These results show that you should bid game, in the long run, if you expect a 35% chance of making ten tricks.

If you are not vulnerable, the values change to: 420, -50, 170 and 140. Now the value of 260 becomes 200 for 50%; but, now with only 40% likelihood it is best not to bid game!

Slam bidding may be evaluated using the same methodology; do you bid 4♠, 5♠, or 6♠?