

Trial Bids

Trial bids are a bidding tool for use when your partnership opens 1 of a Major suit, and then Responder bids 2 of that Major suit.

This simple raise will be either showing 6-9 points [if you are using a traditional points based approach] or 9 Losers [under the Losing Trick Count approach].

In either case, with a known fit, if Opener now simply bids 3 of the Major suit, Responder has little on which to base a sound judgement on whether to bid game, or PASS.

The Trial bid approach attempts to help solve this problem through the Opener introducing a new suit (almost always a minor) at the 3 level.

Types of Trial bid

There are two types of Trial bid:

- Long Suit Trial bid [bidder will generally have 3 Losers in the suit bid]
- Short Suit Trial bid [bidder generally showing singleton in bid suit]

Note: The Long Suit Trial bid is more common and generally considered to be the more effective of the two, as it is asking for Responder's 'help', and thereby sharing partnership information [the Short Suit Trial bid is a simple statement – not as easy for Responder to judge the correct action]

What does it look like?

A Trial bid is [normally] a 'Minor' bid after suit agreement at the 3 level:

Example 1:

North	East	South	West
1♥	PASS	2♥	PASS
3♣ or 3♦			

Either 3Clubs or 3Diamonds in Example 1 above are Trial bids, asking responder: "Can you 'help' us avoid 3 Quick Losers in this suit?"

What kind of hand would it be used with?

For opener to make a Trial bid they would normally have either:

- ⇒ A better than minimum level Opening bid [15+ points]
- ⇒ or 6 Losers [with 5 Losers they would generally bid straight to Game]

And

- ⇒ 3 Losers in a minor side suit

So what is 'Help'?

As we said above, in Example 1, when Opener uses a Trial bid, they are asking Responder, can you help avoid quick losers in the trial bid suit?

'Help' from Responder in the trial bid suit is generally taken to be a holding that limits the partnership to no more than two losers in the Trial Bid suit.

A void, singleton or doubletons are all examples of 'Help', as is an Ace...

Responder Actions

With any of the Responder holdings [void; singleton; doubletons; Ace...] in the Trial Bid suit, Responder would accept Opener's Game offer and bid 4 of the agreed Major suit.

Note: Because there are no 'hard and fast' rules about exactly what suit holdings Opener can have to make a Trial bid; it is sensible to discuss and agree with partner if as Opener you hold K x x x; or Q x x x; in a side suit, do you still use a Trial bid?

Summary

The Trial bid is a worthwhile addition to your bidding agreements, not least because it is a collaborative approach, much better in the long run than unilateral action by one half of the partnership.

It has the merit, by 'asking' below the Game Level, of allowing the partnership to avoid bidding Games where Losers in their hands are 'mirrored' [both Opener and Responder have Losers in same side suit].