

# What are (Game) Trial Bids?

Objective: Make a game contract in Major or in NT, when you have >16 HCP and when your partner responds with your bid suit.

Consider an auction that starts 1H - 2H - 3C.  
What could 3C possibly Mean?

Well, it must show an interest in playing in game, otherwise partner would have passed. Also, it can't show an interest in playing in clubs; who would be interested in playing in clubs when you've found a four-four heart fit. Therefore, it must be a way of inviting a bid of 4

Such bids are known as trial bids. They allow more subtle methods of inviting game than simply using 1H - 2H - 3H  
They are considered to be a part of Acol, as well as other bidding systems.

## When is a bid a trial bid?

A trial bid may only occur when a suit has been bid and supported, and is a bid in a different suit.

Furthermore, a trial bid must leave space for partner to sign off below game. If a bid meets these criteria it is usually a trial bid, although there are some exceptions.

Some examples:

1H - 2H - 3C  
1H - 2H - 2S

A trial bid.  
Although this is a bid in a major suit, you've found a good fit already.  
Therefore this is also a trial bid.

1H - 3H -  
4D

Partner cannot stop before 4 so this cannot be a trial bid. This is most likely a cue bid.

1D - 1H -  
2H - 3C  
1D - 1H -  
2H - 3D

A trial bid.  
Rather unusual, but I would treat this as a trial bid. I'd still much rather play in hearts than in diamonds.

1H - 1S -  
2S - 3H  
1D - 3D - 2H

Too useful as a natural bid to be used as a trial bid.  
If responder had a four card heart suit, he would have bid it in preference to supporting the diamonds. Therefore the only natural interpretation of 2 is that opener has 6 diamonds and 5 hearts. As this happens only very rarely, this bid is usually used as a trial bid.

1D - 3D - 3H

Some people play this as a cue bid, while others use it as a trial bid.  
Check with your partner.

## Asking or showing?

Players that use trial bids tend to fall into two groups:

- (a) those that **request help** in the trial suit; and
- (b) those that **show help** in the trial suit.

Clearly this is an area where you and your partner should agree.

My preference is to bid the suit I would like some **help** in. Consider the auction 1H - 2H, 3C

Opener must have about 16+ points to make the trial bid. Therefore, due to this strength, he is likely to be worried about only one suit. Furthermore, partner is likely to only have help in one suit. Therefore bidding the weak suit is likely to give partner more useful information than bidding one of the other suits.

Therefore, in the following pages I will assume that we are **asking for help in the trial suit**, rather than showing it.

## OPENER'S RE BID: Trial bids over a major

Once you and your partner have agreed to play in a major suit, a trial bid is a method of inviting partner to bid four of that major.

Suppose the auction has gone 1H - 2H.

Example 1:

♠	J 10 3	HCP = 16
♥	A Q J 9 4	Bid 2S, to invite 4H, showing the suit where you would like help.
♦	A K J 2	Remember that a singleton is a useful asset. However, three
♣	5	small in a suit (or J 10 3) is not.

Example 2:

♠	J 10 3	HCP = 14
♥	A J 9 8 4	Not strong enough to invite, so pass 2H.
♦	A K J 2	
♣	5	

Example 3:

♠	J 10 3	HCP = 18
♥	A K Q 9 8	Strong enough to bid 4H directly.
♦	A K J 2	
♣	5	

### PARTNER'S RESPONSE TO OPENER'S RE BID:

His response depends on (a) no of HCP and (b) no of losers in the help suit

- if he has 1 loser - then he bids 4H;
- if he has 2 loser - then he bids 3H;
- if he has 3 loser - then he bids 3H;

To reply to a trial bid over a major, bid 4 of that major if your hand is maximum, 3 if it is a complete minimum. For other hands, look at your holding in the trial suit. If you can help out in that suit bid 4 of the major, otherwise bid 3. Suppose that the auction has gone 1H - 2H, 2S.

Example 1:

♠	Q 8	HCP = 9	$16 + 9 = 25$
♥	K 8 6 2	A maximum hand, for your bidding so far, so bid 4H.	
♦	9 4 3		
♣	A 8 6 4		

Example 2:

♠	A 8	HCP = 5	$16 + 5 = 21$
♥	10 8 6 2	A minimum hand, so bid 3H.	
♦	8 4 3		
♣	-		

♣ J 9 8 4

Example 3:

♠ 8  
♥ K 8 6 2  
♦ 9 8 4 3  
♣ Q 8 6 4

HCP = 5+2                  16 + 7 = 23

A medium strength hand (8 points, with the singleton), with a rather useful singleton in spades, the trial suit. Bid 4H.

Example 4:

♠ 9 8 6  
♥ K 8 6 2  
♦ Q 8 4 3  
♣ Q 4

HCP = 7 + 2                  16 + 9 = 25

A medium strength hand, but with no help at all in spades. Bid 3H.

## Trial Bids over a Minor

Trial bids over a minor differ from those over a major, in that they are used to determine whether 3NT is a good contract. Therefore, trial bids over minor suits are **requests for stoppers**.

- a) 12-14 HCP                  Pass  
b) 15-19 HCP                  Bid weakness suit (as you need stoppers in all suits to achieve NT contract)

### OPENER'S RE-BIDS:

Suppose the auction has gone 1D - 2D.

Example 1:

♠ 8 5  
♥ A K 4  
♦ A J 9 8 2  
♣ K J 3

HCP = 16

This is just about strong enough to bid 2S, inviting 3NT.

Example 2:

♠ 5 3  
♥ A J 9  
♦ A J 9 4 2  
♣ K 10 3

HCP = 13 + 1

Not strong enough to invite, so pass 2D.

Example 3:

♠ 5 3  
♥ A K 9  
♦ A J 9 8 2  
♣ A Q 3

HCP = 18

You have enough points for 3NT, but that will not be much use when the defence run five spade tricks. Find out whether partner has a spade stop by bidding 2S (inviting 3NT)

### RESPONSE TO THE OPENER'S RE-BID:

When replying to a trial bid over a minor, bid no-trumps if you have a stop in the suit. Otherwise, rebid the minor.

Suppose that the auction has gone 1D - 2D, 2S:

Example 1:

♠ A 8 4  
♥ 8 6 2  
♦ K 7 4 3  
♣ 8 6 4

HCP = 7

Minimum hand, but with a good stopper in spades. Bid 2NT.

Example 2:

♠ A Q 4  
♥ 8 6 2  
♦ K 7 4 3  
♣ 9 8 4

HCP = 9

A maximum hand, with stoppers in spades. Bid 3NT.

Example 3:

♠ 9 4  
♥ Q J 2

HCP = 9

A maximum hand, but **no spade stopper**. Worth exploring the

♦	K Q 4 3	possibility of a diamond game, so <b>bid 4D</b> .
♣	J 9 8 6	NB: Jump bid to show max hand
Example 4:		
♠	9 4	HCP = 6
♥	J 8 6 2	A nondescript hand with no spade stop. Bid 3D.
♦	K Q 7 3	
♣	9 4 2	

### Long-Suit Game Try

The most common form of Trial Bid. After a single major raise, a bid is made in a side suit containing length (at least three cards) as a means of inviting game. This additional information may help responder evaluate his hand.

### Short-Suit Game Try

A unique form of Trial Bid, in which opener's shortest suit (typically a singleton) is bid to invite game. The short-suit game try allows very accurate evaluation, but the drawback is the information disclosed to the enemy.

### Weak-Suit Game Try

A slight variation of the Long-Suit Game Try, where opener makes his Trial Bid in his weakest side suit that contains length (three or more cards.)

### Help-Suit Game Try

A slight variation of the Long Suit Game Try, in which opener makes his Trial Bid in a side suit.

### Two-Way Game Tries

A method of incorporating both the Long-Suit Game Try and the Short-Suit Game Try. After a single major raise, opener's cheapest step rebid (2S or 2NT) is artificial and forces responder to make a "relay" bid (2NT or 3C), after which opener's next bid is a long-suit game try. Consequently, any immediate rebid (other than the cheapest) is a short-suit game try.

### Long Suit Trials -Help Suit Game Try -Short Suit Trials -Weak Suit Game Tries-Counter Trial

This concept also bears several designations in the bridge community such as **Help Suit Game** but which is better known in North America and under the auspices of the ACBL as **Weak Suit Game Try**. The concept is employed to discover whether the partnership actually has a reasonable game possibility by determining whether or not one partner has help in a second suit, in which the player asking for help needs assistance. In general, the Long Suit Trial is used only for the two Major suits.

**Note: the original, basic concept has been revised, altered, expanded, and varied to:**

- 1 include the option of asking for support by showing a long suit,
- 2 to ask for support by showing a short suit, and
- 3 be able to bid in such a manner that the partnership can ask with either a long suit or a short suit.

The following illustrations should clarify this conventional method and its inclusive variations.

	North	East	South	West	Meaning
♠	1	Pass	♠ 2	Pass	
♣	3				Partner, if you have help in Clubs, bid game.
♦	3				Partner, if you have help in Diamonds, bid game.
♥	3				Partner, if you have help in Hearts, bid game.

NB: There is a raise to 3 level - showing 18/19 HCP

By bidding either 3 Clubs, 3 Diamonds, or 3 Hearts after responder employs the Limit Raise and supports the opening bid only one level, North is seeking a possible game by attempting to discover whether South has values in the second named suit. The information North is conveying to South is that North has a second suit, in which North has three plus cards in the bid suit and this suit contains two or three immediate losers.

The following example is suited for such a Long Suit Trial.

	North		South
♠	96	♠	8543
♥	AQJ63	♥	K842
♦	A4	♦	965
♣	A742	♣	K8
	1H		2H
	3C		4H

By bidding 3 Clubs, North is informing South that he has **two to three losers in the Club** suit and **is asking for assistance**. The guidelines for the responses of the partner are, in general, as follows:

- 1 If the partner has **zero losers** in the bid suit, then the partner should bid game.
- 2 If the partner has **1 loser** in the bid suit, then the partner should bid game, as in the example above.
- 3 If the partner has **2 losers** in the bid suit but has the **maximum values** for a single raise, then the partner should also bid game.
- 4 If the partner has 2 losers in the bid suit but has the minimum values required for a single raise, then the partner should sign off on the three level in the trump suit.
- 5 If the partner has three losers in the bid suit and maximum values for a single raise, the partner can show a suit also on the three level below the trump suit by bidding that suit. This is known under the designation of Counter Trial. The opener can then either sign off on the three level in the established trump suit or bid game if the known values of the Counter Trial suit are suitable and helpful in determining whether game is possible.

According to the above listed general guidelines, the following auction is possible using the guideline listed under number 5:

	North	East	South	West
♠	1	Pass	♠ 2	Pass
♣	3	Pass	♥ 3	Pass
♠	4			

Additional examples could be added, but the concept should be clear.

### SHORT SUIT TRIALS

The converse is also a known bridge concept, but has as its foundation an entirely different conveyance of information to the partner. The auction remains the same, which is a single raise of the opening Major suit. Again this is known generally in North America as a Help Suit Game Try.

The following illustration should clarify the difference between these two methods.

	<b>North</b>		<b>South</b>
♠	K9763	♠	A854
♥	AJ10	♥	KQ73
♦	KQ73	♦	65
♣	6	♣	975
		♠	
♠	1	♠	2
		♣	
♣	3		4

Using the Short Suit Trial bid, a new bid by the opener shows a **singleton**. In the above example, North is informing South that he holds a singleton Club. It is irrelevant whether the singleton is an honor or not. Since the trump suit has already been established, South is forced to make a decision which is based upon the following guidelines.

- 1 If South has only three losers in the Trial Suit, then South should bid game.
- 2 If South holds the Ace and only two other losers in the Trial Suit, then South should bid game
- 3 If South holds no Ace and two other losers in the Trial Suit, then South should bid game in the trump suit if South holds maximum values but sign off on the 3 level if South is minimum.
- 4 If South holds the Ace and one other loser in the Trial Suit, then South should bid game in the trump suit if South holds maximum values but sign off on the Three Level if South is minimum.
- 5 If South holds no Ace and one other loser in the Trial Suit, then South should simply sign off on the 3 level regardless of whether South holds minimum or maximum values.

### LONG SUIT TRIAL AND SHORT SUIT TRIAL COMBINED

It is possible to use both the Long Suit Trial and the Short Suit Trial bid together as one

Since there is a difference in the bidding sequence between both Major openings, both

North	East	South	West
♠ 1	Pass	♠ 2	Pass
2 NT	Pass	♣ 3	Pass

Once the trump suit has been established, North, in this case, bids 2 No Trump. This b

♦ 3 : Shows a singleton in Diamonds.

♥ 3 Shows a singleton in Hearts.

♥ :  
**Shows**  
**a**  
**singleton**  
**3 n in**  
♠ : **Clubs.**

The **responder** is generally requested to bid 3 Clubs when the opener attempts a Sho

- ♦ 03:00 Shows a singleton in Diamonds.
- ♥ 03:00 Shows a singleton in Hearts.
- ♠ 03:00 Shows a singleton in Clubs.

The opener is then able to compare his singleton to the known singleton in the holding of the partner, and

**Any new suit rebid by the opener after 1 Spade - 2 Spades is a Long Suit Trial bid.**

The following second example shows a 1 Heart opening.

	North	East	South	West
♥	1	Pass	♥ 2	Pass
♠	2	Pass	2 NT	Pass

Once the trump suit has been established, North, in this case, bids 2 Spades. This bid is totally artificial a

- ♣ 03:00 Shows a singleton in Clubs.
- ♦ 03:00 Shows a singleton in Diamonds.
- ♥ 03:00 Shows a singleton in Spades.

Again, the **responder** is requested to rebid 2 No Trump, again called a **Puppet**, in order that the opener

3 ♣  
**Shows a**  
**singleton**  
**in Clubs.**

3 ♦  
**Shows a**  
**singleton**  
**in**  
**Diamond**  
**s.**

3 ♥  
**Shows a**  
**singleton**  
**in**  
**Spades.**

If the responder has chosen to show his singleton, then the opener becomes the captain and will set the

Any new suit rebid of 3  
♣ or 3  
♦ by the opener after 1  
♥ -2  
♥ is a Long Suit Trial bid.

If you wish to include this feature, or any other feature, of the game of bridge in your p:













a concept. This is only a matter of partnership agreement. The combination of both me  
1 Spade and Heart openings are shown below. **The first example shows a 1 Spade o**

bid is totally artificial and requests that the partner bid 3 Clubs. The **opener** is commur

rt Suit Trial bid, but the responder is not required to accept the request, which is also k

d set the final contract. Using this method, the normal meaning generally given to a 2 No Trump rebid by

and requests that the partner bid 2 No Trump. The **opener** is communicating to his partner that he holds

be able to show his **singleton**, but is not forced to do so. The responder, by bidding a suit, can show a s

final contract. The opener can better determine this after his partner has communicated the location of t

partnership agreement, then please make certain that the concept is understood by bot













ethods, however, demands from the partnership that the natural meaning of a 2 No Tr  
**opening.**

icating to his partner that he holds a **singleton** and will bid the suit of that singleton a

known as a **Puppet**. In the case that the responder has a **singleton**, then the response

by the opener in such an auction can no longer be used. The 2 No Trump rebid by the opener becomes a

bid by a **singleton** and will bid the suit of that singleton at his next turn. Depending on what North bids next, North

will bid the suit of that singleton according to the following:

North will bid the singleton opposite a singleton.

h partners. Be aware whether or not the feature is alertable or not and whether an anr













ump bid will be lost. Most partnerships agree that this is a minor loss in any bidding se

t his next turn. Depending on what North bids next, North is showing a **singleton** in th

ler can instead respond accordingly.

Relay bid and requests the responder to bid 3 Clubs in order that the opener can show his singleton. If 1

lorth is showing a **singleton** in that suit.

ouncement should or must be made. Check with the governing body and/or the bridg













sequence involving a Major suit. The guidelines for using the combined method are illus

at suit.

the responder does not rebid 3 Clubs, then the responder is showing a singleton according to the charts

e district and/or the bridge unit prior to the game to establish the guidelines applied. P













trated below.

above.

lease include the particular feature on your convention card in order that your opponer

















nts are also aware of this feature during the bidding process, since this information mu

















ist be made known to them according to the Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge. We di

















o not always include the procedure regarding Alerts and/or Announcements, since the

















These regulations are changed and revised during time by the governing body. It is our in

















tention only to present the information as concisely and as accurately as possible.