

HOW TO BID A SLAM

East deals and passes. It's your turn to bid with this hand:

S	South
♠	KQ52
♥	3
♦	AQJ9753
♣	10

You have a 7 card diamond suit but far too many points to open pre-emptively. Just 1♦ will do. What is your call after partner bids 1♠? Your 12 HCP improve greatly. You give yourself about 6 more dummy points because of the 2 singletons. The long diamond suit counts for another 5 points. That's 23 points. You certainly have a game in spades. But you might have more. You should do something that gets that idea across to partner. He may have only 6 points, so you don't yet know if you are in the slam zone. The correct bid is 4♣. This is called a splinter bid and conveys a lot of information. It says we have the necessary points for game. After all, we're now at the 4-level. It also says that you have one or no clubs and are interested in slam. The decision is left to partner to continue the search for slam. If he isn't interested, he will just return to 4♠. If he wants to keep looking for slam, he bids something else. His side suit bids are cue bids showing controls in those suits. He will make that decision based on his club holding. If he has lots of club losers he can count on them being ruffed in your hand.

This is how the bidding should progress. It is a little advanced, but I'll explain:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♦
Pass	1♠	Pass	4♣
Pass	4NT ¹	Pass	5♠ ²
Pass	5NT ³	Pass	6♣ ⁴
Pass	6♠ ⁵	All Pass	

- 1 This is Roman Key Card Blackwood, It is asking for aces where the king of trump is treated as an ace. Therefore there are 5 "aces." The reply to the question is given in steps – starting with 5♣. This first step shows 1 or 4 aces; 2nd step is either 0 or 3 aces; the 3rd step shows 2 aces without the queen of trump; and the 4th step shows 2 aces with the queen of trump.
- 2 Since you have the ♦A and the ♠K as well as the ♠Q, your reply is at the 4th step, 5♠.
- 3 This bid of 5NT is now asking for kings, outside the king of trumps. It can only be used if all 5 of the "aces" are accounted for. If the queen of trump wasn't reported on in the last round, it would have counted as a king.
- 4 The first step of 6♣ says I have no outside kings.
- 5 North settles for a small slam.

East leads the ♥6. What is your plan for making the slam as North, the declarer?

N	North
♠	A10983
♥	A107
♦	8
♣	AQ64

East leads ♥6

S	South
♠	KQ52
♥	3
♦	AQJ9753
♣	10

Notice that North was missing 3 kings, He wasn't worried about the ♦K or ♠K because of his distribution. But he was worried about the ♥K so he stopped at a small slam. He didn't know about your singleton heart.

You have 2 heart losers and 3 club losers. You could cross ruff the losers in each hand but if the trumps don't break 2-2, you won't have enough trump left to draw them. A better plan would be to set up dummy's diamonds. To do this safely, you should not pull all the trump. Win the ♥A and pull one round of trump to see if they split at least 3-1. Lead to the ♠K. They both follow. Now play the ♦A and follow that with the ♦Q, If West plays low, ruff in our hand and go back to dummy by ruffing a heart. Then lead the ♦J. Your hope is that either West will cover one of these honors or East will have to play the ♦K if it is doubleton
If West holds the ♦K he will probably cover your ♦Q. Now you are all set. You pull the remaining trump, ending in the dummy and discard the clubs on the good diamonds. You have actually taken all 13 tricks.

This is the entire deal:

6 D	N North	W N E S
	♠ A10983 ♥ A107 ♦ 8 ♣ AQ64	P 1♠ P 1♦ P 4NT P 5♣ P 5NT P 6♣ P 6♠ P
W West		E East
♠ J7 ♥ KQJ9 ♦ K104 ♣ KJ52		♠ 64 ♥ 86542 ♦ 62 ♣ 9873
	S South	
	♠ KQ52 ♥ 3 ♦ AQJ9753 ♣ 10	6♠ N NS: 0 EW: 0

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/kdsty4g> , or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the “Next” button on the bottom to advance through each trick. Alternatively, by clicking on “Play” you can play all four hands and see if you can make the hand on your own. If you click on GIB, the software will analyze the hand and show the result for each opening lead.

© David Germaine 2017