



Adventures in Bridge

Leaders in Bridge Entertainment and Education

www.advinbridge.com

This Week in Bridge

(195) Maximal Doubles

© AIB

Level: 3

Robert S. Todd

robert@advinbridge.com

General

Help Suit Game Tries (HSGT) are a valuable way to explore games after we have found a fit. But in competitive auctions we do not have as much space to communicate with partner. In these cases, it is important to have good agreements about the meanings of your bids. Let's look at how to make game tries in competition.

Help Suit Game Tries (HSGT) in Competition

When we have found a fit and want to try for game in a competitive auction, there is less room available to describe our hand than in a non-competitive auction. The less room there is available to make a HSGT, the less precise our game tries become.

Examples

1♠ P 2♠ 3♣

___?

Here we have room to make HSGTs into either ♦ or ♥.

- 3♦ HSGT in ♦.
- 3♥ HSGT in ♥.
- 3♣ Competitive - to play.

1♠ P 2♠ 3♦

___?

Here we only have room to make a HSGT into one suit (only ♥). Thus, in this auction 3♥ is a "general" HSGT, not necessarily asking about help in the ♥ suit.

- 3♥ "General" HSGT
- 3♣ Competitive - to play.

In both above examples, a double by Opener shows a good hand and is more defensively oriented. This double is cooperative, asking partner to pass with some defense or choose between playing 3♣ or 4♣ with a more offensively-oriented hand.

Maximal Doubles

When the opponents compete in the bidding in the suit just below our suit, then there is no room left to make a HSGT.

Example

1♠ P 2♠ 3♥
__?

In this case, a bid of 3♣ is still strictly competitive – not inviting partner to bid again.

The way we make a try for game in this “jammed up” auction is with double. This double is called *Maximal Double*. A maximal double is our only game try in this auction.

Partner will now have to evaluate their hand – bidding 3♣ with minimum values for a raise and bidding 4♣ with maximum values for their raise. A maximal double does not promise much defense, as we do not expect partner to pass and convert this double to penalty without an exceptional hand.

Conclusion

When we are in a competitive auction and have found a fit then it is more difficult to make a try for game because bidding space is more limited in these auctions. When we are completely out of bidding space our only game try available is a maximal double. Add this gadget to your bidding tools to allow you and partner to more clearly compete in bidding or try for game in these difficult competitive auctions.