

MAJOR SUIT RAISES I – SESSION 1: Deal #3

Dealer: South
 Vul: E-W

♠ A K J 5 2	♠ 10 7 4	♠ Q 9 3			
♥ 10	♥ K Q J 9	♥ 6 5 3			
♦ K J 5 2	♦ 9 7 3	♦ A Q 4			
♣ A 9 8	♣ Q 6 3	♣ 10 5 4 2			
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 80px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ 8 6				
	♥ A 8 7 4 2				
	♦ 10 8 6				
	♣ K J 7				

<i>Suggested Bidding:</i>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
				Pass
	1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
	3 ♦	Pass	4 ♠	Pass
	Pass	Pass		

This deal introduces the Help Suit Game Try. West will probably invite game with a 3 ♠ bid. Let that happen. Some East players might accept the invitation and others might pass. When all tables have finished playing in the contract they reached, use the following discussion to introduce Help Suit Game Tries.

How many of you reached game on this deal? How many wish they had reached game? You should make 4 ♠ with no trouble. It's getting there that could be the problem.

West has 17 points and makes a game try after East raises to 2 ♠. One way to try for game is for West to bid 3 ♠. East is looking at eight points – not the worst single raise but not the best single raise either. It's difficult to know what to do with eight points.

Opener can make it easier on East. Rather than say only, "I have medium strength," opener can also say, "I have medium strength *and* here's where I need help." What suit in West's hand looks like it could have the most losers? Diamonds. A 3 ♦ rebid by West is *not* an attempt to find a better trump suit. Spades have been agreed on as trump. 3 ♦ is a game try, telling East to really appreciate high cards in two suits – in diamonds and in the spade suit that East-West already agreed would be trump. This bid is known as a *Help Suit Game Try*.

East should fully appreciate the ♠Q and ♦A Q after a 3 ♦ game try. All eight points are in the suits where partner wants to see them and East should definitely continue to 4 ♠.

Suggested Lead: North has a good sequence and will probably lead the ♥K.

Suggested Play: Declarer counts losers: two clubs and one heart. The play is easy – draw trump and claim. Game bid and made on only 24 HCP! The Help Suit Game Try will help you bid some good games like this one and also help you avoid some bad games.

MAJOR SUIT RAISES I – SESSION 1: Deal #4

Dealer: West

Vul: Both

♠ 5 4 ♥ 10 8 7 4 3 ♦ A 8 6 ♣ K Q J	♠ A K J 8 3 ♥ A 5 ♦ 3 2 ♣ A 9 6 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 80px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">N</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">W E</div> <div style="margin-top: 5px;">S</div> </div> ♠ Q 9 7 2 ♥ 6 2 ♦ K Q 4 ♣ 8 7 5 4	♠ 10 6 ♥ K Q J 9 ♦ J 10 9 7 5 ♣ 10 3
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Suggested Bidding:

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Pass	1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠
	Pass	3 ♣	Pass	3 ♠
	Pass	Pass	Pass	

North has 16 HCP plus one length point. A medium opening hand invites game. South has a total of eight points (adding one for the doubleton) and will have to use judgment in deciding whether to go to game. *How* North invites will be very important to the outcome. North might make a general game try of 3 ♠, but a Help Suit Game Try of 3 ♣ is much more specific. 3 ♣ says that opener has losers in clubs. If responder also has several losers in that suit, game is not a good prospect.

Now South must decide the final level. While the fourth trump is good, South's four small clubs are bad. The worst holding you can have in a suit where partner needs help is three or four small cards. South should sign off in 3 ♠.

Suggested Lead: East leads the ♥K.

Suggested Play: Declarer counts losers: one heart, one diamond and three clubs. On a normal 3-2 club split, the fourth club will be a winner. Declarer's work is to draw trump, promote a diamond trick and play clubs, watching to see how they split. Declarer must give up the lead twice in clubs in order to make the fourth club good. Once clubs split, declarer has nine tricks.



Trade South's ♦K Q for West's two small diamonds and also trade West's ♣K Q for South's ♣7 5. Now declarer loses only one heart and two diamonds and 4 ♠ makes. It's not just how many points you have together. It's *where* those points are that determines how many tricks you can take. As the late bridge author Max Hardy said, "points don't take tricks, fits take tricks."

MAJOR SUIT RAISES I – SESSION 1: Deal #5

Dealer: North
 Vul: N-S

♠ 10 7 ♥ A 6 3 ♦ K 8 7 5 ♣ 9 8 4 2	♠ A K J 8 4 ♥ K Q J 10 ♦ 10 ♣ Q 7 6	♠ Q 9 ♥ 9 8 5 ♦ Q J 9 4 2 ♣ A 5 3			
<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>			N	W E	S
N					
W E					
S					
♠ 6 5 3 2 ♥ 7 4 2 ♦ A 6 3 ♣ K J 10					

<i>Suggested Bidding:</i>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠
	Pass	3 ♣	Pass	4 ♠
	Pass	Pass	Pass	

With 17 total points, North makes a game try. *Don't make a Help Suit Game Try in a suit that doesn't need help.* North's four-card side suit is not the place to look for help. North needs help in clubs, so North makes a game try by bidding 3♣.

South accepts the game try with eight good points – the ♦ A, the ♣ K J 10 (cards partner is looking for) plus a fourth trump. If North makes a 3♥ game try instead, South's hand will not look as good and game might be missed.

Suggested Lead: East might lead the ♦ Q.

Suggested Play: Declarer's losers are one club, one heart and possibly one spade. With no clues from the opponents' bidding or play, declarer is likely to avoid a spade loser by following the saying "eight ever, nine never" when drawing trump. This saying applies to suits where the queen is missing. If you have a finessing position, take the finesse with eight or fewer cards and play for the queen to drop with nine or more cards in the suit. Once trumps are drawn, declarer will promote hearts and clubs to make an overtrick.

Did anyone simply bid game with North's hand? It looks really good with the second strong side suit, so I can't blame you too much, but you did get lucky to find partner with a good helping hand.



Leave North's hand face up and suit the remaining cards. Take away the ♣ Q and ♥ Q J from North and put in the ♥ A 9 2 instead.

North has: ♠ A K J 8 4 ♥ A K 10 9 2 ♦ 10 ♣ 7 6.

Now it's even more tempting to whirl off and bid game. They say, "five-five – come alive." With two strong five-card suits, a medium opener should consider bidding game rather than making a game try.

We've seen that high cards can be help for opener's second suit. Do you think there is any other form of help? Shortness and the ability to trump is also help. Let's see how responder's judgment works on our next deal.

MAJOR SUIT RAISES I – SESSION 1: Deal #7

Dealer: South

Vul: Both

	♠ Q 9 8 4 2 ♥ 9 ♦ K 10 8 5 ♣ 10 3 2										
♠ 7 5 ♥ Q 7 6 3 ♦ J 2 ♣ K Q 9 8 6	<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	N		E	W				S		♠ J ♥ A K 8 5 4 2 ♦ Q 9 7 4 ♣ A J
N		E									
W											
	S										
	♠ A K 10 6 3 ♥ J 10 ♦ A 6 3 ♣ 7 5 4										

<i>Suggested Bidding:</i>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Pass	4♠	??	1♠

North could raise to 2♠ to show a fit and 6-10 total points. But a raise to 4♠ is far more effective. The “standard” meaning of a raise to game in a major is to show this type of hand, known as a “weak freak”. The purpose of raising so high is twofold. Perhaps 4♠ will make because of the big fit and North’s freakish distribution. But if it doesn’t, chances are good that East-West can make something. The immediate raise preempts East-West out of the room they need to talk.

A “weak freak” hand should have five or more cards in support of opener’s major plus a singleton or void. It should NOT have many high card points – a maximum of six or seven high card points. Opener is not expected to look for slam after a weak freak raise. That is why you should have so few high cards. With more high cards plus crazy distribution, you could easily miss a slam.

Poor East if the auction does go as suggested. It’s dangerous to bid 5♥. West could be completely broke and might not even have a good heart fit. But it’s also dangerous to pass when the opponents may be stealing your hand. What would *you* do?

Suggested Play in spades: Declarer will lose one heart, one diamond and three clubs. 4♠ goes down two. North-South will lose 500 points if they are doubled and only 200 if they are undoubled.

Suggested play in hearts: East’s losers are one spade and two diamonds right off the top. If East bids 5♥, the defenders should take all these tricks. Since North’s weak freak raise promised five trumps, South won’t try for a second spade trick and can switch to the ♦A to get partner’s reaction. North plays an encouraging ♦10 and South continues diamonds to defeat 5♥.

Going down in 4♠ is a small price for North-South to pay for keeping the opponents from making 4♥. Without North’s preemptive raise to 4♠, East-West should have no trouble entering the auction. North’s immediate 4♠ bid could shut them out of the bidding or force them to bid too high. Isn’t preempting fun?

MAJOR SUIT RAISES I – SESSION 1: Deal #6

Dealer: East
Vul: E-W

	♠ A Q 9 2		
	♥ 10 5		
	♦ 10 9 4 2		
	♣ A 8 7		
♠ 6	N	♠ J 8 5 3	
♥ A 9 4 3	W E	♥ K Q J 8 7	
♦ 8 7 5	S	♦ A K Q	
♣ 9 6 5 4 3		♣ 2	
	♠ K 10 7 4		
	♥ 6 2		
	♦ J 6 3		
	♣ K Q J 10		

<i>Suggested Bidding:</i>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♥	Pass
	2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
	4♥!	Pass	Pass	Pass

Although West has only 4 HCP, there is a total of seven points when you add points for the singleton, so West has enough to make a single raise.

East has a medium hand and makes a game try, looking for help to avoid spade losers. It's hard to believe that West could have enough to go to game but West's points are perfect – the trump ace, a singleton in a suit where partner has several losers, plus an extra trump to be used for ruffing. Did West dare bid game?

Suggested Lead: South is likely to lead the ♣K and is likely to continue leading clubs, but South really should take a moment to think about the hand. East asked for help in covering spade losers and West's help is shortness. How does South expect declarer to make the contract? By ruffing spade losers in dummy. What can South try to do to prevent that? Lead trump! If South switches to a trump and North-South continue with another trump when they win their spade trick, declarer will end up losing two spades. If the defenders don't lead trump, declarer will end up losing only one spade to make an overtrick. When you play duplicate bridge, those overtricks matter!

Suggested Play: East's losers are one club and four spades. Declarer plans to ruff as many spades as possible in dummy. Declarer will give up one spade and hopes to ruff the other three spades to make an overtrick. If the defenders start leading trump, declarer will only be able to ruff two spades, but 4♥ still makes. Not bad with only 20 HCP! Even counting distribution, East-West have only 24 total points. But all of their points are *working*. When you see a game make with less than 26 points, chances are it's because the hands fit well together with all the points working. What are some clues that your hands fit well together? High cards in your long suits, a short suit across from several losers in partner's hand, and a bigger than eight-card trump fit.



Trade West's ♥3 for South's ♦3. Is 4♥ such a good prospect now? Not if the defenders lead a trump! Declarer will be able to ruff only one spade loser and should lose three spades and a club. *Shortness is more valuable when dummy has more trumps.*