

## Help Suit Game Tries (HSGT)

We use HSGTs when we have raised partner's major suit from the 1-level to the 2-level. We can use them when we have opened 1 of a major and partner has raised or when partner has responded with 1 of a major and we have raised.

When we have been raised, we want to look at our losing trick count (LTC). We determine the LTC by determining the losers in each suit and totaling them up. Here's how it works:

For each suit with 3 more or cards, you have 3 losers minus the number of A, K or Q you have in that suit. For 2 cards, consider only the A and K. For a singleton, only the A.

A singleton Ace = 0 losers.

- AKxx = 1 loser
- AQxx = 1 loser
- Kxxx = 2 losers
- Jxx = 3 losers
- Qx = 2 losers
- x = 1 loser

So, with a hand like ♠ AKT64 ♥ AK3 ♦ 9876 ♣ 4, we count losers as 1 ♠, 1 ♥, 3 ♦ and 1 ♣ = 6 losers. \*

Here is why this interests us: when partner raises our major from the 1-level to the 2-level, we should make a HSGT with 6 losers. With more losers, we should probably pass. With fewer losers, we should just bid a game. With six, we want help from partner to make the decision.

♠ AK1064	-1 loser	Opener	Responder
♥ AK3	-1 loser	1 ♠	2 ♠
♦ 9876	-3 losers	3 ♦	?
♣ 4	-1 loser		
	= 6 losers		

This shows interest in game in spades, but does not promise a real diamond suit. It is forcing for one round, shows at least 3 cards and a minimum of 2 losers in that suit, and is not alertable. Responder needs the following for "help" requirements:

- 1) Singleton, or
- 2) Doubleton, (only if a maximum point count of your limit bid), or
- 3) K9 or K87, or
- 4) A2 or A65
- 5) QJ43

Generally speaking, if we have help in the suit that we are asked about, we bid a game. If we don't, we return to 3 of the major. Don't get caught up in the overall strength of your hand, focus on the suit you've been asked about. 5 HCP with "help" are generally worth more than 9 HCP without "help".

\* LTC only works once you and partner have found a fit. It's not an accurate assessment of losers in any other circumstance.

**Board 2**  
 East Deals  
 N-S Vul

	♠ 6										
	♥ 10 8 7										
	♦ A J 4 3 2										
	♣ K J 7 4										
♠ Q 10 9 8	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A K 7 3 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K 9 6 3		♥ A Q 5 4									
♦ 10 9 7 5		♦ Q									
♣ 3		♣ 8 6 2									
	♠ J 5 4										
	♥ J 2										
	♦ K 8 6										
	♣ A Q 10 9 5										
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>								
		1 ♠	Pass								
2 ♠	Pass	3 ♣	Pass								
4 ♠	All pass										

**Auction Commentary:** West has 4-card support for East's opening spade bid AND a singleton. This is a powerful combination; West will score as many club ruffs as East has losing clubs. West should definitely raise here; this isn't even a minimum. East has six losers. With six losers, we should make a game try, and East does with 3♣. This is music to West's ears; they need to cover three of East's six losers to make game a good prospect, and they have at least that, ♠Q, ♥K and multiple club ruffs. West should jump to game.

**Opening Lead:** We can make arguments for anything but a heart; partner is not likely to have strong enough hearts for us to score a ruff, and when they have the ♥Q we can easily be blowing a trick in the suit. East bid clubs; if West is short in clubs, it may work well for us to lead trumps to cut down on the number of club losers that East can ruff in the dummy. Against that, leading from ♠Jxx will work out poorly if partner also has a spade honor. Clubs don't look right; East bid those, so when they have strength there we are sitting over it and should wait for them to lead the suit. So, we are left with diamonds, and should lead the small one (BOSTON) -- ♦6.

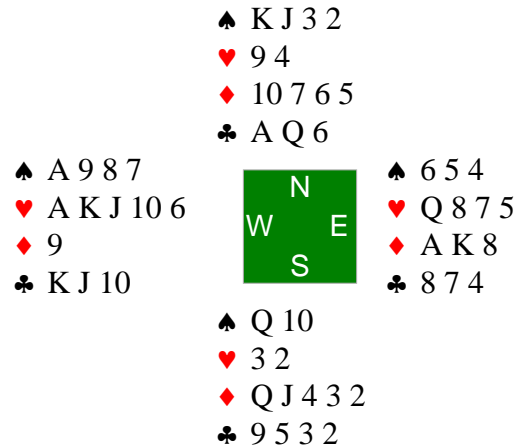
**Play Commentary:** Before you begin lecturing partner for jumping to game with only 5 HCP, count your losers; 0♠, 0♥ (probably), 1♦, 1♣ (you are going to ruff the two little ones in dummy). You should make 5! THANK YOU PARTNER, GREAT BID!!

Now, to justify partner's confidence in us, we have to play it well. DO NOT draw trump until you have dealt with your club losers. If North continues with diamonds at trick 2, ruff and immediately play a club from your hand. When you get back in, you can ruff a club in the dummy, draw one round of trump to get back to your hand, ruff another club in the dummy, and only then draw the remaining trumps.

**Takeaway:** Four-card support and a singleton opposite partner's five-card major is a powerful combination. Points matter less than losers in these situations. When partner makes a game try in your singleton suit, you are going to take care of those losers.

**Board 8**

West Deals  
None Vul



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♥	Pass	2 ♥	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
3 ♥	All pass		

**Auction Commentary:** West counts themselves for six-losers and makes a game try with 2 ♠. East has no help in spades, but they are not a minimum. They can tell West this by bidding 3 ♦, saying, "Partner, I've got no help in spades, but I do have good diamonds. Will that help?" West has a singleton diamond and can tell the hands will fit poorly. They sign off in 3 ♥.

**Opening Lead:** It doesn't seem right to lead a ♠, ♣ or ♥, so a diamond it is. Lead the ♦ 7 to let partner know you don't have any strength in the suit (BOSTON).

**Play Commentary:** Well, there isn't much to the play. The hands really do fit poorly. We will lose 2 spades and either 1 or 2 clubs. If South has the ♣ Q we will make 10 tricks and wonder why we didn't bid more. Nothing is perfect. The West hand is very strong for a six-loser hand.

**Takeaway:** The goal in these situations is to figure out whether or not the hands fit well. On board 2, our side had 20 HCP and made 11 tricks, and two of the HCP were the worthless ♦ Q. On this hand, we have 25 HCP and can make only 9 or 10 tricks. If East held the ♣ AQ instead of the ♦ AK, ten tricks would be assured with one less HCP.

The point is, we don't have to randomly guess. We can ask partner about their hand and then make an informed decision. (OK, it's an educated guess, but it's still better than a random one.)

**Board 9**

North Deals  
E-W Vul

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

West	North	East	South
	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♥
Pass	2 ♥	Pass	3 ♦
Pass	4 ♥	All pass	

**Auction Commentary:** This game really is for the bidders. The North hand has good (unbalanced) shape and prime honors (♠ A, ♥ AKT) and is well worth an opening bid. When South makes a game try in diamonds, North, with a singleton and four trumps should not hesitate to accept the game try.

**Opening Lead:** It is normal to lead an ace from ace-king so we lead the ♦ A. With a singleton in dummy, many pairs play that 3rd hand will give suit-preference for the other two suits with their choice of spot card -- (*download our lesson from October 5*). Here, East would signal with the ♦ 7 because they have stronger and longer spades, and east suggests it's a safe exit card for West.

**Play Commentary:** We have choices for how to play the hand; all of them good. The simplest is a dummy-reversal. Instead of trying to trump our diamonds in the North hand, we can trump North's spades in our hand. We should lose 1 ♦ and at most 1 ♣. Another 21 HCP game with an overtrick.

**Takeaway:** Hopefully, you will start to see a pattern emerge, where shape and extra trumps are more powerful than high-card points. When you have hands with no shape, 4-3-3-3 or 4-3-4-2, you should want to pull in the reins unless you have maximum high card points. When you have great shape, the HCP are much less important, especially if the hands fit. In either case, using a help-suit game try will help you make the best decision.