

Targeting Your Invitations by Kevin Wilson

www.kevinwilson.com

I always get asked an impossible question: What does it take to invite game after partner raises 1♠ to 2♠? The answer isn't helpful because you might invite game with any of the following hands:

| | | | | | |
|-------------|---------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|
| Example 1: | ♠ AKQ53 | Example 2: | ♠ AJ754 | Example 3: | ♠ AQ10932 |
| | ♥ QJ | | ♥ J2 | | ♥ 32 |
| | ♦ K42 | | ♦ AKQ106 | | ♦ --- |
| | ♣ K52 | | ♣ 4 | | ♣ A10764 |
| | 18 HCP | | 15 HCP | | 10 HCP |
| 1♠ p 2♠ p ? | _____ | | _____ | | _____ |

In example 1, you might bid game but you also might want to invite game based on power. If partner has anything more than a paltry 6 HCP, you would want to be in game. In example 2, you would want to be in game if partner had some help in trumps or aces on the outside, but would want to avoid game when most of partner's high cards were kings and queens outside of the trump suit. In example 3, you want to be in game if partner has just the ♣K and the ♠K because of your trick taking potential. The point is that there is a wide range of hands to answer the question, "What does it take to invite game after partner raises 1♠ to 2♠?" Sometimes it takes 18 HCP and sometimes only 10, but it depends on your shape and your trick taking potential. In general, the less shape you have, the more HCP you need.

Target Your Invitations

Instead of bidding 3♠ with each of the example hands, it is better to recognize that you have all of the space between 2♠ and 3♠ to make your invitation without going beyond 3♠. As long as you stop in 3♠ it doesn't matter how many bids you use to stop, the final contract is still 3♠. So I recommend targeting your invitational bids to let partner know more about which type of invitational hand you have.

1. A new suit is natural and asks for high card help in the suit bid. It is a forcing bid because you will always go back to your major suit as the final contract.
2. 2NT shows a balanced hand with about 17-18 HCP and is looking for game based on power.
3. 3 of the major (1♠ 2♠ 3♠) asks for good trump or good controls for game.

Using these criteria, how would you invite with each of the examples above?

Holding Example 1, many players would just bid game and hope they make it regardless of what partner has. The hand has no additional shape and scattered honors everywhere so an invitation is quite reasonable. The best invitation with the hand is 2NT. Partner will know you have 17-18 HCP and a very

balanced hand. With Example 2, the best invitation is 3♠. You need either good trumps or good controls in hearts and clubs. The queens and the jacks in those suits are useless but the aces will work just fine. It would be a mistake to invite with 3♦ because partner can't possibly like (or have) diamonds and think they are going to help you. In Example 3, you need cards in spades and clubs. As little as the ♠J and the ♣KQ will give you great play for 10 tricks. If partner's high cards are in hearts and diamonds, you'll want to stop in 3♠.

Golden Rules for Inviting and Accepting Invitations

1. Strive to invite game but do not strive to accept the invitation. You don't want both partners always stretching because you will bid too high. This rule means that opener should be the one pushing for a targeted invitation. Responder should not stretch to accept unless responder feels that she has the right cards.
2. Make sure partner can accept the invitation! Don't bid 3♦ with Example 2 because partner can't have diamonds. Think about your invitation before you make it.
3. These examples are of common major suit auctions. The idea applies equally to minor suit invitations. Target invitations rather than play one all encompassing bid.
4. Having honors in partner's long suits is always better than having honors in partner's short suits. Consider this greatly in the decision to accept or reject an invitation!

Example 4: ♠ AQ98
♥ A10953
♦ KJ102
♣ ----
1♥ p 2♥ p ? _____

Example 5: ♠ AKQJ
♥ AJ10754
♦ 106
♣ 4

Example 6: ♠ J4
♥ AKJ32
♦ A3
♣ K1074

Example 7: ♠ 1053
♥ K87
♦ AQ96
♣ 753

Example 8: ♠ 1053
♥ K87
♦ 753
♣ AQ96

1♥ p 2♥ p 2♠ p ? _____

Contact Kevin for individual or group teaching, live seminars, or professional play:
yourbridgepro@gmail.com 865-679-6286

Ex.4: 2♠

Ex.5: 3♥

Ex.6: 3♣

Ex.7: 3♦

Ex.8: 3♣