

Invitational Bids Ask: Please Bid Game with Top of Your Range

I see newer players spend a lot of time agonizing about what they should do when their partner makes an invitational bid, completely ignoring the actual question their partner has asked.

Here's a rule that I found drastically improved my game early on trying to figure out how bidding is supposed to work:

***Any time partner limits their hand
within a 2 or 3 point range,
another bid by you asks partner to
bid game with top of range.***

Barry has discussed this issue before. When one partner limits their hand, the other partner becomes "captain".

A. Examples:

1. 1N - 2N
?

A 1N opening bid shows 15-17. This is a limited bid.

2N asks P to bid 3N with top of range. This is an invitational bid. It invites partner to go to game if they have the top of their range.

What should you bid with this hand?

AK5 QT84 K876 AJ84? You are at the top of your range so bid 3N!

2. 1S - 2S
3S - ?

What is Partner asking? They are asking you to bid 4S if you are top of your range.
(2S shows 6-9, or a bad 10)

What should you bid with this hand?

JT5 543 QJ5 AJT7? Bid 4S!

What about this hand?

JT5 543 QJ5 QJT7? Pass. You are not top of your range.
Answer the question your partner asked :)

3. 1D - 1H
1N - 2N
?

What does the 1N bid show? It shows 12-14, because with 15-17, you would have opened 1N.

What does the 2N bid show or ask?

P wants you to bid 3N if you are top of your range.

What should you bid with this hand?

KJ4 Q2 AKT87 J98? You are top of your range so bid 3N!

4. 1C - 1N
2N - ? What does your 1N bid show? 6-9? or a bad 10?

What should you bid with this hand?

JT5 KJ8 KJ74 T987? Are you top of your range? 3N!

5. 1S - 1N
2S - 3S 2S shows 12-15
?

What does 3S ask? Please bid 4S with top of your range!

B. What does “Top of Range” mean?

“Top of Range” means one of the following:

- (a) you have maximum points for what your bid showed, or
- (b) you have close to maximum points with extras, or
- (c) you have close to maximum points, with no negative features.

Let's go back to the 1st example:

- 1N 2N
? P is asking you to bid 3N with top of your range.

What about this hand?

AK5 QT AQJ84 T92? It's not 17. But you should still bid 3N.

Why? Because you have close to top of your range - 16 points - plus a very nice 5 card suit. This is a nice extra that makes this hand as valuable, if not more valuable, than the first hand we looked at, where 3N was the correct bid.

(This is the first hand we looked at: **AK5 QT84 K876 AJ84**)

What about this hand?

AKT QJ8 AQ84 T92? It's not 17. But you should still bid 3N, because your honours are all working with other honours and you have lots of intermediates (T's, 8's and 9's)

What about this hand?

AK Q75 AQ4 J6542? It's 16, but it's not a great 16, so this might be a hand where you decide to not go to game when Partner invites. Seven of your points are tied up in a doubleton, your QH is unsupported, and the JC is part of a long suit that has no intermediates. Also, 5 of your points are in 2 Q's and a J, which are considered overvalued by point count. These all suggest your 16 points should be discounted.

How about where P makes an invitational raise of your bid of 1H or 1S?

1H - 3H 3H is an invitational bid, showing 10-12 points
?

What should you bid with these hands?

QJ54 QJ654 8 AJ7 Are you top of your range? No, you have only 11 HCP. The singleton D has value, but it is worth less in the hand with long trumps, so perhaps worth 2 points at the most, bringing you up to 13. Even if you valued this at 14, it is so quacky you need to deduct for that.

Pass.

K54 QJ876 A2 K54 Are you top of your range? No, you have 14 points, counting the doubleton AD, so within 1 point, but do you have extras? Not really. Are there negatives? Neither of your K's are supported, and you have few intermediates.

Pass.

C. Here are the things to remember:

1. After you make a bid that narrowly limits your hand, a further bid by your partner is an invitation to bid game if you are top of your range.
2. Top of your range means you either have the maximum points you indicated in your limiting bid, or you are close to the maximum points with extras (or no negatives that require discounting your values).
3. This is sometimes expressed as: partner should be quick to invite, but you should be slow

to accept. What that means is what we've been discussing here: "slow to accept" means the same as: you need top of your range to accept.

(*Warning!* This does NOT apply if the Opp's are interfering in the auction. In that case, another bid by the captain may just be trying to force the opponents up a level, not asking you a question about your holdings.)