TRIAL BIDS

The following applies to opener's rebid following an opening bid of 1♥ or 1♠ and partner's raise to 2♥ or 2♠.

Partner has 6 to 9 points, and might have only three-card support.

Your suit is four-card

with 15 or 16 points	pass	(the magic total of 25 is a distant prospect);
with 17 or 18 points	bid 2NT	(partner can then choose from pass and 3NT, or 3 major or 4 major with four-card support);
with 19 points	bid 3NT	(partner can pass, or convert to four major with four-card support).

♠	A J 7 6	**You**	**LHO**	**Pard**	**RHO**	Fifteen points.
♥	K 6	1♠	-	2♠	-	Only four cards in your major.
♦	K Q 7 6	?				Pass.
♣	Q T 4					

♠	A K 7 6	**You**	**LHO**	**Pard**	**RHO**	Seventeen points.
♥	K 6	1♠	-	2♠	-	Only four cards in your major.
♦	K Q 7 6	?				Bid 2NT.
♣	Q T 4					

♠	A K 7 6	**You**	**LHO**	**Pard**	**RHO**	Nineteen points.
♥	K 6	1♠	-	2♠	-	Only four cards in your major.
♦	K Q 7 6	?				Bid 3NT.
♣	A T 4					

Your suit is five-card

You have at least an eight-card fit

with 15 or 16 points	pass	(the magic total of 25 is a distant prospect);
with 19 points	bid 4 major	(you have at least 25 combined points);
with 17 or 18 points	bid three of a new suit	(trial bid - forcing for one round).

Style of trial bid

There are a number of styles of trial bid from which to choose.
The following style is 'natural and shape-showing'.
Make your trial bid in a suit of some quality and ideally four-card (a 3-card suit is acceptable at a pinch and Q T would be an absolute minimum honour holding).

♠	A K J 6 5	**You**	**LHO**	**Pard**	**RHO**	Fifteen points.
♥	6 5	1♠	-	2♠	-	Pass.
♦	K J 6 4	?				
♣	Q J					

♠	A K J 6 5	**You**	**LHO**	**Pard**	**RHO**	Nineteen points.
♥	A 5	1♠	-	2♠	-	Bid 4♠.
♦	K J 6 4	?				
♣	Q J					

♠	A K J 6 5	**You**	**LHO**	**Pard**	**RHO**	Seventeen points.
♥	6 5	1♠	-	2♠	-	Bid 3♦ inviting partner to choose between 3♠ and 4♠, and promising at least three cards and
♦	K J 6 4	?				some kind of honour holding in diamonds.
♣	A J					

Responding to the trial bid

In response to your trial bid partner will sign off in three of the major with a minimum 6 points or jump to four of the major with a maximum 9 points.
With 7 or 8 he will sign off at the three-level with a poor fit in the trial suit, and will jump to the four-level when the two hands appear to be working well together.

A typical poor fit would be two or three small cards in the trial suit.
A typical good holding would be either three or more cards to an honour in the trial suit, or a void or singleton.

(See over for examples.)

Partner's hand

		You	LHO	Pard	RHO
♠	A K J 6 5			1♠	-
♥	6 5	2♠	-	3♦	-
♦	K J 6 4	?			
♣	A J				

Your hand

		You	LHO	Pard	RHO	
♠	Q 8 4			1♠	-	Six points is minimum.
♥	J 3	2♠	-	3♦	-	Sign off in 3♠.
♦	8 5 3 2	?				With the hand above you would expect to lose two hearts and two diamonds for nine tricks.
♣	K 7 6 3					

		You	LHO	Pard	RHO	
♠	Q 8 4			1♠	-	Nine points is maximum.
♥	A 3	2♠	-	3♦	-	Jump to 4♠.
♦	T 8 5 2	?				With the hand above you would expect to lose one heart and two diamonds for ten tricks.
♣	K 7 6 3					

		You	LHO	Pard	RHO	
♠	Q 8 4			1♠	-	Eight points, and your diamonds should combine well with partner's holding in the suit.
♥	A 3	2♠	-	3♦	-	Bid 4♠.
♦	Q 5 3 2	?				With the hand above you would expect to lose one heart, one diamond and one club for ten tricks. .
♣	T 7 6 3					

		You	LHO	Pard	RHO	
♠	T 8 4 2			1♠	-	Seven points, and your diamond singleton should provide some ruffing tricks.
♥	A J 7 3	2♠	-	3♦	-	Bid 4♠.
♦	3	?				With the hand above you hope to make five spades in partner's hand, three diamond ruffs in your hand, and two aces, for ten tricks.
♣	Q 7 6 2					

		You	LHO	Pard	RHO	
♠	T 8 4 2			1♠	-	Seven points, but your diamonds could hardly be more less use.
♥	A J 3	2♠	-	3♦	-	Bid 3♠.
♦	7 5 3	?				With the hand above you would expect to lose one heart, two diamonds, and either a spade or a club for nine tricks.
♣	Q 7 2					

Losing trick count

If you prefer to evaluate your unbalanced hand by the losing trick count then opener will pass with seven losing tricks, make a trial bid with six losing tricks, and jump to game with five losing tricks. This approach will sometimes enable you to bid the game or make a game-try with a few less points than indicated so far.

Minor suits

Note that the above does not apply after a minor suit is raised to the two-level. Opener's rebid in a new suit will still be forcing and will suggest at least seventeen points, but it will now show a no trump stop (Q J x say) in search of a no trump contract.

Opener's reraise

Note that with trial bids as part of your system then a reraise of the agreed suit to the three-level by opener is no longer needed as an invitation.

Instead it should be played as preemptive on a six-card suit in a weak opening hand - raising to the three-level on a nine-card fit purely to make life more difficult for the opponents.

		You	LHO	Pard	RHO	
♠	A K 8 6 5 2			1♠	-	You have a maximum of nineteen points between you - this hand belongs to your opponents.
♥	6 5	2♠	-	?		Bid 3♠ before they find their heart contract.
♦	K 6 4					This bid is not invitational in any way.
♣	7 4					

A word of warning

Although the methods outlined on this sheet are standard you will encounter many good club players who have not adopted the trial bid approach and who use the reraise to three as an invitation to pass or bid four - so be careful when laying with an unaccustomed partner.