

Of course, on some hands, the five level is inevitable. This is more likely to occur when a player makes a bid that uses up a great deal of bidding space.

6. West	West	East	East
♠ J 10 7 5 2	1♠	2NT	♠ A K 6 4 3
♥ A K 9 8 2	4♥	5♣	♥ Q 6 4
♦ A 4	5♦	7♠	♦ 8 7
♣ 2	Pass		♣ A J 10

West's 4♥ bid showed a 5-card heart suit with two of the top three honors. East was delighted to hear that, but without a diamond control, it would have been wrong for him to bid 4NT. West could have had a hand where a diamond lead would have been fatal in 6♠, such as:

♠ Q J 8 7 2   ♥ A K J 4 3   ♦ J 2   ♣ 3

Therefore, East control-bid 5♣. This bid promised a *first-round* control in clubs. Why is that?

**Because 4NT is no longer available, a 5-level control-bid shows first-round control in that suit.**

When West bid 5♦, he promised either the ♦A or a diamond void. If he had second-round control of diamonds, he would jump to 6♠.

That was all East needed to bid the excellent grand slam. Not surprisingly, at the tournament where this hand was actually played, many pairs only got to six.

***Partnership Checklist – Control Bids***

Use this checklist to firm up your control-bidding agreements. Check A or B on #1. Check Yes or No on #2-6. I recommend B on #1 and Yes on #2-6. Keep in mind that this checklist does not address:

- Auctions where a minor suit is bid and raised;
- 2/1 Game Forcing auctions.

1. Each player's first control-bid promises:

- A a first-round control in the suit
- B any control (Italian style)

2. Controls are bid up-the-line, so bypassing a suit denies a control in that suit.

- Yes     No

3. As long as slam is possible, always show a control below the game level.

- Yes     No

4. If partner has shown a 5+ card suit, a control-bid in his suit shows the ace or king.

- Yes     No

5. Once you have shown a short suit, only control-bid that suit with a void.

- Yes     No

6. A control-bid at the five level shows first-round control in that suit.

- Yes     No



## Chapter 6

### 5NT Pick a Slam

In SBME, I gave the convention 5NT Pick a Slam my highest rating. I said, “Although it doesn’t occur as often as other slam conventions, it is still my favorite.” Why is that? Because *both players* are involved in the decision-making process, the partnership will arrive at the final contract only after mutual agreement.

Why is this convention necessary? Most of the time:

- Taking 12 tricks without a trump suit is *not* easy. It is much easier to take 12 tricks in a suit contract;
- Hands with a singleton play better in a suit contract;
- If you have the necessary strength and controls, 12 tricks are available in at least one of the suits – even if it is only a 7-card fit.

The convention works like this: When you know you belong in a small slam, but don’t know where to play, a jump to 5NT asks partner for a suggestion.

After the 5NT Pick a Slam bid, partner can suggest a suit he is willing to play in. Possibilities include:

- Mentioning a new suit.
- Showing mild support for a suit you bid.
- Rebidding one of his suits with extra length or strength in that suit.
- Bidding 6NT if he has nothing worth mentioning or is *positive* that the hand belongs in notrump.

When playing 5NT Pick a Slam, you must remember:

- The 5NT bid is forcing;
- 5NT denies interest in a grand slam.

5NT Pick a Slam is unfamiliar to many players, so I will illustrate the convention with several examples.

1. West	West	East	East
♠ A K 10 6 5 3	2♣	2♦	♠ 4
♥ K	2♠	3♥	♥ A 10 8 7 4
♦ K Q	3♠	5NT	♦ A 9 6
♣ A K 10 9	6♣	Pass	♣ J 6 3 2

East was delighted to hear West open 2♣. However, his heart suit was not strong enough to respond 2♥, so he contented himself with a 2♦ waiting bid.

The auction proceeded naturally through West's 3♠ bid. East was then confronted with a crucial decision. Although his singleton spade was a liability, he did love his two aces. So, instead of bidding 3NT, he made the decision to play in slam.

Too many players who reached the same conclusion would have bid an inappropriate 4NT or an aimless 6NT. However, East was careful to bid a flexible 5NT, which asked partner to express his opinion. West did have a suit he was happy to mention, and that suited East just fine.

6♣ was easy – making six. When spades split 4-2, 6♠ and 6NT would also have been easy – down one.