

THE BOLAND CONVENTION

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
2NT	4NT

These and a number of similar raises to 4NT have a range of about two high card points (HCP). For instance, the 4NT bid above shows 13-14 HCP. The Boland convention is a useful tool in these situations. It goes like this:

-- With a minimum, pass.

-- With a medium holding, bid five of your lowest ranking biddable suit (Q10xx or better)--whether or not the suit has been bid before. To bypass a previously bid suit (clubs, in the auction above) shows that the suit was not "biddable." With no biddable suit to show, bid 5NT. The reason for requiring a biddable suit is to reduce the likelihood of playing a trump holding like A432 opposite J765 when more tricks could be scored in another denomination .

-- With a maximum, bid six of your lowest ranking biddable suit. With none, bid 6NT.

If the 4NT bidder wants to seek further for a suit fit, she also shows biddable suits "up-the-line."

As soon as either partner can count 33 HCP between the two hands, he/she bids six of something. Neither partner can go past 5NT until the HCP total is known to be at least 33 (perhaps counting a point for a ruffing value when a suit fit is found, or for good primary cards/controls).

Opener	Responder
1♠	2NT
4NT	6♥

Opener has 18 or 19 HCP and responder has 15 HCP, a maximum (assuming a 13-15 HCP notrump hand). She would have passed with 13 HCP or less. Knowing that opener has at least 18 HCP (required for the 4NT bid), she bids her lowest ranking biddable suit at the six level. With only 14 HCP she would bid just 5♥, which opener could pass with a heart fit and only 18 HCP.

At match points the bidding cannot stop at five of a minor, so it is not necessary to jump to 6♣ or 6♦ when holding a maximum hand. Bidding 5♣ or 5♦ keeps the bidding lower and facilitates the showing of suits. In this case, an unnecessary jump would show a five-card suit:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2NT (Omnibus, section 3-10)
3♣	3NT
4NT	6♣

Opener's 3♣ rebid asks about responder's majors, and 3NT shows a doubleton spade and no heart suit. The raise to 4NT shows 18-19 HCP, since responder has 13-15. Responder no doubt has a five-card club suit in her maximum hand, since she could have bid a forcing 5♣ with only four.

An unbidable suit can be shown if the suit has been previously bypassed:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2NT
3♣	3NT
4NT	5♦
5NT	6♣

Responder has an unbidable club suit to go with her biddable diamond suit. She would have bid clubs first, of course, if they were biddable. However:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2NT
3♣	3♥
4NT	5♣
5NT	6♥

The 6♥ call shows a biddable suit, since hearts were never bypassed. Boland shows biddable suits up-the-line. The 3♥ bid doesn't count as a Boland bid because it could be based on any sort of suit.

At IMP scoring or in rubber bridge the bidding can stop at five of a minor:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2NT
4NT	5♣
Pass!	

Opener has ♠A10872 ♥A2 ♦AQ ♣A873. Since responder showed 13-15 HCP, he knows that she has 14 exactly. Feeling that 5♣ might be safer than 5♠ or 5NT, he passes. Responder might have ♠K3 ♥Q83 ♦K964 ♣KQJ4. Stopping at 3NT would have been best, but opener has a little too much strength for that.

Boland does not apply when opener has shown a ten-trick notrump hand by opening 2♣ and then rebidding 4NT:

Opener	Responder
2♣	2♦
4NT	

A five-level bid by responder at this point shows a six-card suit with no ace, king, or queen, and is therefore not forcing. See section 6-1, The Two Club Opening.

When the conventional 4♠ notrump raise is applicable, with 4♠ being a weaker raise than 4NT, the range for the slam try is usually narrowed to one point:

Opener	Responder
1NT	4♠ - inviting 6NT, 15 HCP
	4NT - 16 HCP

Opener bids 4NT to sign off over 4♠. Any five-level rebid accepts the slam try and the partnership cannot stop at the five level. Actually the 4♠ bid is unlimited, because responder may continue (with Boland) if he has 17 or more HCP.

If the 4♠ slam try is accepted, bidding continues as usual:

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
2NT	4♠ - slam try
	4NT - minimum hand
	5♣ - biddable club suit (Q10xx or better)