

“Drop-In” Classes \$10
Thursdays at 9:30am or 4:15pm

Sep 24: Hand evaluation beyond HCPs

Oct 1: Declarer play of the hand

Oct 8: Defense, leads, carding

Oct 15: Etiquette

Oct 22: Cue Bids

Oct 29: No class (Ventura Regional Oct 26-Nov 1)

Nov 5: Bridge thinking skills

Nov 12: TBD

Nov 19: TBD

The progression to use:

STAGE

WHAT IS EVALUATED

Before bidding

HCP, distribution, suit quality, controls

After partner bids

Fit, shortness, wasted values, playing strength

Before game/slam decisions

Controls, quick tricks, losers, source of tricks

1. High Card Points (HCP)

The starting point is still the familiar count:

- Ace = 4
- King = 3
- Queen = 2
- Jack = 1

Use HCP to decide whether a hand belongs in the auction and to estimate combined partnership strength

2. Distribution (Playing Points)

In Opener's hand

Typical adjustments BEFORE a fit is found:

- Add 1 point for a 5-card suit
- Add 2 points for a 6-card suit
- Add 3 points for a 7-card suit

Balanced hands such as 4-3-3-3 are often downgraded because they produce fewer tricks

3. Suit Quality

- Upgrade hands with good long suits:
- ♠AKJ984 is much stronger than
- ♠Q98764 even though both hands contain 6 cards

A suit headed by touching honors is much more likely to produce tricks

4. Controls

Aces and Kings are more valuable than Queens and Jacks, especially when exploring **slams**.

- Ace = 2 controls
- King = 1 control

This is why a 12-point hand with 3 Aces is stronger than a 12-point hand with 4 Queens and 4 Jacks.

5. Fit with Partner

In Partner's hand

Once a trump fit is found, hand evaluation changes dramatically. Add 1 point for 4 trumps, 2 for 5 etc

Shortness count:

Void = 3

Singleton = 2

Doubleton = 1

6. Wasted Values

Honors opposite partner's short suits lose value.

For example, ♠QJ opposite partner's singleton ♠2 are wasted values

Conversely, honors opposite partners long suits become more valuable: ♠KQJ opposite partner's ♠T9876

7. Quick Tricks

How many tricks can I take **immediately**?

- $AK = 2$
- $AQ = 1\frac{1}{2}$
- $A = 1$
- $KQ = 1$

8. Losing Trick Count (LTC)

Once a trump fit is established, many players rely more on LTC than HCP.

LTC estimates how many losers each hand contains, making it particularly effective for suit contracts with fitting hands and it works best with UNBALANCED hands

The way LTC works: count 1 losing trick for each missing Ace, King and Queen

♠AK75

♥K84

♦A72

♣K94

You have 1♠ losers, 2♥ losers, 2♦ losers and 2♣ losers for a total of 7 losers. Subtract you combined losers from 24, and the result is the estimated number of tricks your side can win in ♠ or ♥

9. Re-evaluate throughout the auction

An example of how you might think:

“I started with 14HCPs. Partner has supported my 6-card suit, making my singleton worth extra. My Queens are working, I have excellent controls, and my hand has become worth about 17-18 playing points.”

The value of a hand changes as more information becomes available.

A useful “rule of thumb”

1. How many HCPs do I have?
2. How good is my shape?
3. Are my honors working?
4. Do I have a good long suit?
5. Have we found a fit?
6. If so, how much is my shortness worth?
7. How many controls do we have?
8. How many tricks does this hand actually look capable of taking?

Opener – how many points is this hand worth? (HCP & Distribution)

Answers

1. ♠ KQJT9	♥ AT98	♦ T9	♣ T9	11
2. ♠ KQJT9	♥ AJT98	♦ T9	♣ 2	13
3. ♠ KQJT9	♥ KQJT9	♦ T9	♣ 2	14
4. ♠ QJ987	♥ QJ3	♦ QJ2	♣ QJ	12?
5. ♠ AT987	♥ AT87	♦ A5	♣ A2	17
6. ♠ AK432	♥ T987	♦ K2	♣ K2	14

Opener bid 1♠, you are the partner: how many points is this hand worth? (HCP & Fit with Partner)

Answers

1. ♠87	♥KJ7	♦AKQJ2	♣432	14
2. ♠876	♥Q76	♦AK32	♣A43	13
3. ♠8765	♥A8	♦A432	♣KQ3	15
4. ♠AK	♥AK2	♦K543	♣KT98	20
5. ♠432	♥K432	♦K432	♣43	7
6. ♠65	♥AKQJ	♦A543	♣543	14

Next Thursday

Declarer play of the hand