

Bridge For Your Brain Tips

www.BridgeForYourBrain.com

Free Weekday Zoom Bridge Tips ~ 9:45am-10:15am Central
World Champion Donna Compton

Thinking in Patterns is the Key to Counting Like an Expert!

Hand Patterns and Suit Patterns are one in the same. The key to counting bridge hands is **THINKING** in terms of hand patterns and suit patterns.

Of the 39 possible distributions, **fourteen** patterns make up 96% of the patterns you will experience at the bridge table.

Then extend your patterns to the top **eight** patterns and you will know 85% of the patterns.

Start by working with the top **five** patterns... which you will see 71% of the time.

You may either make flash cards or use the tips found in the Mental Counting Exercises on the reverse side.

Hand & Suit Patterns	Frequency of Patterns
4-4-3-2	21.55%
5-3-3-2	15.52%
5-4-3-1	12.93%
5-4-2-2	10.58%
4-3-3-3	10.53%
6-3-2-2	5.64%
6-4-2-1	4.70%
6-3-3-1	3.45%
5-5-2-1	3.17%
4-4-4-1	2.99%
7-3-2-1	1.88%
6-4-3-0	1.33%
5-4-4-0	1.24%
5-5-3-0	0.90%

Memorize the common patterns of the 13 cards in a suit and 13 cards in a hand.

Use the common hand patterns listed to the left. Know those patterns like the back of your hand.

Concentrate on how the unseen cards divide.

Think odds. Think divide.

- When there is an odd number of cards missing, then the cards break as evenly as possible.
- When there is an even number of card missing, then the cards break slightly uneven.

Memorize the original layout. Whether you're declaring or defending, commit to memory the shape of the dummy and your own hand.

Mentally review the bidding. Come up with a picture of each players' general hand pattern and high-card strength based on what you hear and do not hear from the bidding

Focus your count on just one unseen hand. There are only two unseen hands during the play. Pick the one you know the most about and figure out that hand's distribution.

- Long Suit in Auction
- Most bidding
- Opening Lead

Use what you know about that hand to figure the distribution of the other hidden hand.

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Brain Training Exercises

Counting a bridge hand requires you to train your brain to think in patterns of 13. Instead of counting 52 cards. You want to focus on counting four groups of 13. The following exercises will help train your brain to this this way. The best part is you can do these exercises while you play bridge!

Exercise #1 ~ What's the Hand Pin?

The first exercise is called "What's the Pin" which trains your brain to think in base 13 instead of base 10. The pin number is the four-digit number of the shape of the hand in rank order. For example:

♠ A K 4 ♥ Q 7 6 5 ♦ J 9 ♣ A 8 7 4

This hand's pin is 3-4-2-4 (spades, hearts, diamonds and clubs).

- Each time you sort your hand – *identify your hand's pin number.*
- Each time the dummy comes down – *identify the dummy's pin number.*

Exercise #2 ~ Other Three Hands

The second exercise you can do while you are dummy! Seeing only one hand makes this exercise a bit more challenging but, hey, what else do you have to do while you are dummy?

- Analyze the bidding and opening lead
- Add up what you know about each player's suit length
- Watch the played tricks and defender's signals
- Depending on the contract:
 - If the contract is notrump, figure out the pattern for the opening lead suit.
 - If the contract is a suit, figure out the pattern of the trump suit.
 - Eventually, you can expand this dummy exercise to two suits, then three suits, then all four.

Exercise #3 ~ Declarer & Defender

The third exercise you can do while you are declarer and defender.

- **As Declarer:**
 - Focus on the pattern of your Working Suit ~ potential winner suit.
 - Then move to a second suit.
- **As Defender:**
 - Focus on the pattern of the opening lead suit.
 - Then move to Declarer's Working Suit.

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