

Counting Points



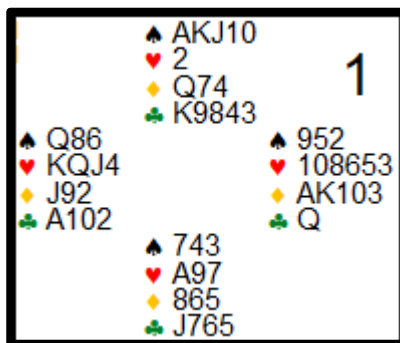
Counting High Card Points “HCP”

Basic Point Value

Evaluating a bridge hand requires counting the points a hand may contain. We determine “HCP” by counting the Honours a hand contains.

A=4, K=3, Q=2, J=1

You add your HCP by adding all these cards in your hand. See these examples.



♠AKJT ♥2 ♦Q74 ♣K9843	13 HCP
♠952 ♥T8653 ♦AKT3 ♣Q	09 HCP
♠743 ♥A97 ♦865 ♣J765	05 HCP
♠Q86 ♥KQJ4 ♦J92 ♣AT2	13 HCP

Now using this information, count the HCP from these hands

1. ♠AKJT ♥2 ♦Q74 ♣K9843
2. ♠T83 ♦AKJ98 ♣A9652
3. ♠AK9 ♥AQJ9 ♦QJ2 ♣543
4. ♠AK87 ♥J942 ♦A84 ♣AK
5. ♠9654 ♥Q8 ♦T7 ♣T9873

Answers

Counting HCP is the beginning of evaluating a hand. You establish your HCP by counting the values of all your honours (A, K, Q, J).



Evaluation Points

Evaluation points can increase and decrease a hand value. Evaluation points are subjective and can sometimes be fixed by partnership agreement.

Decreasing Point Value

We decrease the value of a hand for the following reasons

Take off a point for the following hands having

- ♣ a flat shape,
- ♣ a valueless honour,
 - ◇ including a valueless doubleton
- ♣ 4 or more cards to a J in a valueless distribution
- ♣ 3 or less cards to a J, take off a point

The East hand has a singleton ♣Q. In evaluating this hand, we should take a point off for this card. So now the evaluated card point of this hand is 8, not the 9 HCP we calculated earlier.

The South hand has 4 cards to the ♣J. Its possible this card may win a trick but it would be 4 cards in before doing so. We should reduce our evaluation by a point. South now has an "ECP" of 4

West's hand is flat, it has a 3433 shape. The ECP is 12 for this hand

North's ECP has no reductions so its ECP, for the moment, is 13

Calculate the ECP of the same hands earlier.

1. ♠AKJT ♥2 ♦Q74 ♣K9843
2. ♠T83 ♥♦AKJ98 ♣A9652
3. ♠AK9 ♥AQJ9 ♦QJ2 ♣543
4. ♠AK87 ♥J942 ♦A84 ♣AK
5. ♠9654 ♥Q8 ♦T7 ♣T9873

Answers

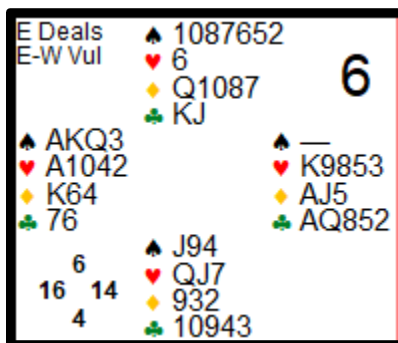
We can use decreasing evaluation points in calculating opening, overcalling, and responding

Increasing Point Value

We increase the point value of a hand based on some of these criteria. Increasing point value is often determined once a fit has been established between the partnership.

Add a point to the hands having the following. After finding a fit, add a point

- ♣ for each extra card above 8 card fit
- ♣ Shortness in a alternate suit
 - ◇ 1 for a doubleton,
 - ◇ 2 for a singleton, and
 - ◇ 5 for a void.



Looking at this hand, East opens 1♥, What is west's "ECP"? Is it a)4, b)16, c)17, d)18, e)19, f)20 ?

The answer is d)18, counting 16 HCP, + 1 for length in suit, +1 for shortness in clubs. On a good day, I like my spade holding and may even evaluate this hand as 19

Using our new information to count points, let's calculate our original hands to partners opening 1♠ and then again to partners opening 1♣

1. ♠AKJT ♥2 ♦Q74 ♣K9843
2. ♠T83 ♦AKJ98 ♣A9652
3. ♠AK9 ♥AQJ9 ♦QJ2 ♣543
4. ♠AK87 ♥J942 ♦A84 ♣AK
5. ♠9654 ♥Q8 ♦T7 ♣T9873

Answers

When not to evaluate

Do not count ECP when

- ♣ you are not supporting partner.
- ♣ NT is the contract.
- ♣ partner has bid a minor suit.
 - ◇ Minor suit contracts often end up in NT.
 - ◇ Count ECP if partner has bid his minor suit twice



Opening and Responding



Opening a hand with 5-card Major

Rule of 20

Sometimes we don't have our 13+ HCP to open a hand. There are other methods that can be used including the "Rule of 20". This allows you to evaluate a hand by counting its HCP and adding length from the two longest suits. If this is equal to 20+ then it should be safe to open the hand. Let's see some examples.

[Using our Training 101 Hand Record Sheet, open these hands](#)

Hand 05 north has 12 HCP but has 22 points using rule of 20.

Hand 10 east has 11 HCP, its two longest suits add to 9 meeting rule of 20.

Hand 11 south has 12 HCP and 9 points on length for its longest suits.

Would you open these hands?

1. ♠K ♥AK86432 ♦J4 ♣T84
2. ♠AKJT ♥2 ♦Q74 ♣K9843
3. ♠QJT95 ♥KJ2 ♦T ♣AT97
4. ♠T87652 ♥6 ♦QT87 ♣KJ
5. ♠KJ ♥6 ♦T87 ♣KJ98432
6. ♠AJ ♥6 ♦T87 ♣AJ98432

Responding to Partners Major Opening



We should have 6+ HCP before making any responses and more if vulnerable or responding at the two level. Shape often plays a factor.

Let's look at various auctions and what they mean.

Auction	Meaning
1♥ - P - 3♥	Responder has 4♥ and 6 or less HCP
1♥ - P - 3♣	Responder has 4♥ and 7-9 HCP
1♥ - P - 3♦	Responder has 4♥ and 10-12 HCP
1♥ - P - 2NT	Responder has 4♥ and 13+ HCP
1♥ - P - 1NT - P 2♣ - P - 2♥	Responder has 2+♥ and 6-7 HCP <i>Some people reverse these two</i>
1♥ - P - 2♥	Responder has 3♥ and 8-9 HCP
1♥ - P - 1NT - P 2♣ - P - 3♥	Responder has 3♥ and 10-12 HCP



Minor Suit Opening and Responses

Opening minors is different than opening majors. Players often have different agreements here. The majority of players play better minor or short as 2 club. Forcing one club is gaining traction and will be discussed in another topic.

Short club allows players to only open 1♦ when they have 4 or more diamonds and no 5 card or better major. Of course, they still need opening points. Better minor is only promising 3 cards in the suit opened and also denies having a 5-card major.

Short as 2 Clubs

On hands that can open with no 5-card or better major and no 4 card or better diamond hand, we can open 1♣. This is a catch all bid and shows a hand of any shape that does not have a 5-card major and denies having a 4-card diamond hand. But it does promise 13 HCP. Typical hands are 4432 and 4333 or similar. They are never 4342 or 4351 or similar.

Better Minor

Players use this system the most. It promises at least three cards in the minor suit opened and promises no 5-card major. There is one exception. A hand that has 3 bad cards in the one minor and 2 honors in the other minor may consider opening the 2-card minor.

Responses

Responding is similar to responding to major openings. Any 4-card major or better with responding HCP often bypassing a 5-card minor. Yes, that's right show a 4-card major or better over a 5-card minor considering shape and values. When playing short club, responding clubs requires 5-cards to respond, partner could have opened with 2.

Responding to a 1♦ opening could be responded with 4♦. There are several ways to respond with minors to the minor opening bid. We will discuss them in detail later in the course.



Inverted Minors

Describing the Auction

Inverted Minors

Inverted minor exchanges the single and double raise. Players playing fast denies and slow shows will generally adhere to this convention. This convention is used when Opener bids a minor and responder has support for that minor and no 4-card or better major suit. The responder's bids require an alert.

We have several tools to show values in the bid suit. Once established the partnership can attempt to find 3NT using cue bids.

Partnership agreement

Partners will have to decide on what their flavour is for this convention. Players often include playing criss-cross as the additional part therefore being able to show a wide diversity of points with fit.

Openers Responses to minor opening

1. Bidding a 4-card major or better with appropriate HCP
2. Bidding 1NT or 2NT with balanced hand and appropriate HCP
3. Bidding no-trumps with a stopper in the unbid suit
4. Raising the minor using our tools below

Auction	Meaning
1♣/♦ - P - 3♣/♦	Responder has 5♣/♦ and 6 or less HCP
1♣ - P - 2♦	Responder has 4♣ and 10-12 HCP
1♦ - P - 3♣	Responder has 4♦ and 10-12 HCP
1♣/♦ - P - 2♣/♦	Responder has 4♣/♦ and 13+ HCP
1♣/♦ - P - 1NT - P 2x - P - 3♣/♦	Responder has 4♣/♦ and 7-9 HCP <i>Partner may have reversed here, let them decide</i>



Examples

1. Bidding a weak hand.

With 0-6 HCP, opener should jump bid at the 3 level.

Opener	Responder
♠872	♠K3
♥AT84	♥Q63
♦AKQ5	♦76432
♣94	♣853

Opener	Responder
1♦	3♦
Pass	

Weak Jump raise,

- promises less than 6 HCP,
- no 4-card major and,
- 5-card fit in suit bid

Player passes, no extra values

2. Showing Invitational Hand.

With 10-12 HCP, responder should jump bid in the other suit. Opener with a minimum should accept the contract.

Opener	Responder
♠872	♠K3
♥AT84	♥QJ3
♦AKQ5	♦76432
♣94	♣A85

Opener	Responder
1♦	3♣
3♦	Pass

Jump raise in opposite suit,

- promises less than 10 - 12 HCP,
- no 4-card major,
- and 4-card fit

Bid 3 to limit your hand and play.



Examples

3. Another Invitational Hand.

With 10-12 HCP, responder should jump bid in the other suit. Opener with a better hand should bid a new suit. Responder will cue bid any stoppers he has up the line.

Opener	Responder
♠A86	♠QT9
♥QJT9	♥K72
♦K52	♦832
♣A43	♣KQJT5

Opener	Responder
1♣	2♦
2♥	2♠
3NT	Pass

Jump raise in opposite suit,

- promises less than 10-12 HCP,
- no 4-card major,
- and 5-card fit

2♥ Shows second suit and game interest.

2♠ Shows stopper in suit

3NT shows stoppers in other suits and 14-19 HCP



4. Raising the NEW MINOR with 4 cards in suit.

We use this bid to show we cannot support partners suit, nor can we bid the other 4-card major, and we cannot meet our criteria to bid NT.

Opener	Responder
♠K6	♠AT32
♥T6	♥KQ872
♦KQ56	♦AJ932
♣QJ932	♣8

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1NT	2♦ (1)
3♦ (2)	3NT (3)
Pass	

- (1) New Minor Forcing,
- (2) Natural denying 4♠, a ♠ stopper, and shows no ♥ support.
- (3) Responder bids 3NT as he has ♠ stopper and game values.

5. Opener Rebids his suit.

This is the opener's last resort. He lacks any of the before mentioned fits. He cannot bid the other major, he cannot support partner, he cannot bid the "new minor". It's most likely a hand gone wrong.

Opener	Responder
♠K6	♠AT832
♥AJT65	♥K7
♦956	♦Q82
♣KJ6	♣QT8

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
1NT	2♣ (1)
2♥ (2)	2NT (3)
Pass	

- (1) New Minor Forcing,
- (2) Opener has neither ♠ support nor a ♦ stopper and cannot raise ♣.
- (3) Responder bids 2NT as he has ♠ stopper and invitational values



New Minor Forcing

Describing the Auction

New Minor Forcing

This convention is used when responder bids a major over opener's minor. We don't know if responder has bid with 4 or more cards in that suit. If we have three cards in that suit, we have the means to investigate. Let's discuss an auction.

The opener opens a minor 1♦ and responder bids a major 1♥. If opener has 4 of that major, he should respond by setting the suit. What happens if opener only has 3, Responder could have answered with 5. Opener can now bid 1NT setting up the asking question from responder. What is the asking question? Why is bidding the unbid minor. This says to partner, I do have 5 AND AN **INVITATIONAL HAND** and asks opener if he has 3 cards in that suit. Opener will respond based on his HCP, 12-13 the 2 level, 14-15 the three level. Players always think they must speed and bid game. Slow yourselves down. A good pair will get to the right contract. We still don't know what responder has in points or shape.

Opener's Responses to New Minor Forcing

1. Bidding a 4-card major
2. Showing 3-card support for partner's major
3. Bidding no-trumps with a stopper in the unbid suit
4. Raising the "new minor" with 4 cards in that suit
5. Rebidding his suit if none of the above conditions are met



Examples

1. Bidding a four card Major.

The first priority is to show the opposite 4-card major, if it is present. Looking for a 4-4 card fit because it is generally preferred.

Opener	Responder
♠QJ7	♠AT932
♥AKT7	♥Q932
♦A563	♦Q2
♣65	♣KT

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
1NT	2♣ (1)
2♥ (2)	3♥ (3)
4♥ (4)	Pass

- (1) New Minor Forcing,
- (2) 4 card Major,
- (3) Invitational raise showing 4 cards in suit,
- (4) Game Bid with reasonable hand.

2. Showing 3-card Support.

With 12-13 HCP, opener should bid at the 2 level. With a good 13-14 HCP, opener should jump raise to the 3 level.

Opener	Responder
♠QJ7	♠AT932
♥AKT	♥Q932
♦A563	♦Q2
♣765	♣KT

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
1NT	2♣ (1)
3♠ (2)	4♠ (3)

- (1) New Minor Forcing,
- (2) Invitational raise with 3 cards in suit, denying 4 cards in other major,
- (3) Game Bid with reasonable hand.



Examples

3. Bidding No-Trump with Stopper in unbid suit.

Opener can bid 2NT with 12-13 HCP or 3NT with a good 13-14 HCP provided he lacks the other 4-card major nor support for the suit in question.

Opener	Responder
♠Q6	♠AT932
♥KT6	♥Q2
♦K56	♦QT932
♣AT932	♣K

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
1NT	2♦ (1)
2NT (2)	3♦ (3)
Pass (4)	

- (1) New Minor Forcing,
- (2) Invitational raise showing a stopper in the other major,
- (3) Rebidding the minor shows at least 4 cards in suit,
- (4) Pass with a minimum hand.

Opener	Responder
♠K6	♠AT932
♥AT6	♥Q2
♦K56	♦QT932
♣AT932	♣K

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠
1NT	2♦ (1)
3NT (2)	

- (1) New Minor Forcing,
- (2) Promises a ♥ stopper and game values.



Examples

4. Raising the NEW MINOR with 4 cards in suit.

We use this bid to show we cannot support partners suit, nor can we bid the other 4-card major, and we cannot meet our criteria to bid NT.

Opener	Responder
♠K6	♠AT32
♥T6	♥KQ872
♦KQ56	♦AJ932
♣QJ932	♣8

Opener	Responder
1♣	1♥
1NT	2♦ (1)
3♦ (2)	3NT (3)
Pass	

(1) New Minor Forcing,

(2) Natural denying 4♠, a ♠ stopper, and shows no ♥ support.

(3) Responder bids 3NT as he has ♠ stopper and game values.

5. Opener Rebids his suit.

This is the openers last resort. He lacks any of the before mentioned fits. He cannot bid the other major, he cannot support partner, he cannot bid the “new minor”. Its most likely a hand gone wrong.

Opener	Responder
♠K6	♠AT832
♥AJT65	♥K7
♦956	♦Q82
♣KJ6	♣QT8

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
1NT	2♣ (1)
2♥ (2)	2NT (3)
Pass	

(1) New Minor Forcing,

(2) Opener has neither ♠ support nor a ♦ stopper and cannot raise ♣.

(3) Responder bids 2NT as he has ♠ stopper an invitational hand.



Questions

Bid the following hands as responders second bid

	Auction	Hand
1	1♣ - P - 1♥ - P 1NT - P - ?	♠K ♥AK8643 ♦J42 ♣T84
2	1♦ - P - 1♠ - P 2NT - P - ?	♠JT853 ♥A432 ♦J4 ♣T8
3	1♦ - P - 1♠ - P 2♥ - P - ?	♠JT853 ♥A432 ♦J4 ♣T8
4	1♣ - P - 1♥ - P 1♠ - P - ?	♠AK ♥A8643 ♦T52 ♣T84
5	1♣ - P - 1♠ - P 1NT - P - ?	♠AK54 ♥A864 ♦T52 ♣T8
6	1♦ - P - 1♠ - P 1NT - P - ?	♠AK54 ♥A86 ♦T52 ♣T86



Taking Tricks

Winning Tricks

Winning tricks can be accomplished by doing one of the following:

- Playing the highest card in a suit.
- Trumping (Ruffing) when you have no cards in the lead suit.
- Playing a card that cannot be overtaken or trumped.

Setting Up Tricks

Sometimes we need to sacrifice a trick to set up the remaining tricks. Timing of this is often the key to arriving at a successful contract.

Taking tricks can be done using the following methods. Each explained in more detail.

- ♣ Leading High cards.
 - ◇ Playing honours from short side.
 - ◇ Finessing to capture missing honors.
 - ◇ Playing for the drop.
 - ◇ Playing to a trump card
 - ◇ Playing to a void suit.

Examples.

Answers

Chapter 1

Counting Points

1. 13
2. 12
3. 17
4. 19
5. 2

Decreasing points

1. 13
2. 12
3. 16
4. 18
5. 0

Increasing Points 1♠

1. 16
2. 17
3. 16
4. 21
5. 4

Increasing Points 1♣

1. 15
2. 17
3. 16
4. 18
5. 0

Chapter 2 Opening Hands

Major Openings

1. 1♥
2. 1♣
3. 1♠
4. Pass
5. 3♣

New Minor Forcing

1. 2♦, you can invite with 3♥
2. 3♣, it still applies over 2NT
3. 3♣, look for the double fit.
4. 2♦, it still applies in this auction
5. 2♦, partner has not denied 4♥
6. 3♣, asks partner for ♣ stopper

Opening Hands

1. 1♥
2. 1♣
3. 1♠
4. Pass
5. 3♣

Opening Hands

1. 1♥
2. 1♣
3. 1♠
4. Pass
5. 3♣