

Tips on Hand Evaluation (April 2012)

- All bridge players use the 4-3-2-1 method for counting hands
 - Experienced bridge players then further evaluate their hands to distinguish between “good” and “bad” hands that contain the same HCP
 - ♠ AKT973 ♠ K T853 ♣ 4 ♣ 5 == “outstanding” ten count
 - ♠ QJ4 ♠ J82 ♠ K64 ♠ QJ32 == “horrible” ten count
-

1. Assign value for good spots

- a. Tens and nines are worth a lot more than threes and twos

♠ A432 ♠ K65 (7 HCP)

- In NT, this suit is worth 2 tricks 100% of the time
- It is worth 3 tricks 36% of the time (when the suit splits 3-3)
- It will never take 4 tricks
- No chance for a defensive error playing the suit

♠ AT98 ♠ K65 (also 7 HCP)

- In NT, this suit is worth 2 tricks 100% of the time
- If the player guesses the position, 3 tricks can always be achieved
 - You won't always guess right!
- There are three chances for four tricks (not likely, but possible)
 - ♠ QJ ♠ 7432
 - ♠ Q ♠ J7432
 - ♠ J ♠ Q7432
- One might induce a defensive error for four tricks as well

2. Upgrade hands with touching honors

- a. Downgrade hands with spread out honors

- ♠ AK76 ♠ J983 ♠ KQT2 ♣ 4 – good honor texture
 - ♠ AJ84 ♠ KT73 ♠ Q962 ♠ K – poor honor texture
-

3. Upgrade hands with honors on top of long suits

- Partner gets dealt the worst hand ever!

♠ 432 ♠ 432 ♠ 5432 ♠ 432

♠ AKT985 ♠ AK876 ♠ 5 ♠ 7

- If spades are 2-2, and hearts 3-2, you'll still take 10 tricks in spades opposite the worst hand ever
 ♠KT9875 ♠K8765 ♠A ♠A

- Here you will lose two spades and three hearts for sure against correct defense with the same splits

4. **4333 hands are horrible; subtract a point no matter what**

5. **4441 hands should be treated with caution**

- They can be useful, but they are hard to describe because they are three suited
- Beware especially of the 1-4-4-4 hand which has a flawed rebid
 - ♠K ♠AJ93 ♠J852 ♠K542
 - If you open 1♠, what will you rebid after 1♠ by partner?
 - Sometimes passing first planning to double later is a better plan (but that doesn't always work)

6. **Be aggressive when partner overcalls 1NT in the direct seat**

- Partner's honors should be "working" – lying in a favorable spot
 - ♠KT7 ♠AT942 ♠85 ♠942 (7 HCP)
 - If partner *opens* 1NT, transfer to hearts and pass
 - If partner overcalls 1NT, invite game with 2NT after the transfer (especially at imps!)
 -
-

7. **Be very cautious with three small in the suit bid on your right**

- Marginal two level overcalls are especially dangerous
 - If LHO raises RHO's suit, this improves your hand substantially
-

8. **Consider 1NT for semi-balanced hands that will be awkward to rebid**

- Unbalanced hands in the 15-17 HCP range can be awkward to describe in terms of point count. You can't always open 1NT with a singleton, but 5-4-2-2 is OK

- a.i. ♠92 ♠AKJ62 ♠AQ73 ♠J4 – open 1H, and rebid 2D. Bid where you live, and that is in the red suits.
- a.ii. ♠KJ ♠AQ63 ♠Q8743 ♠KT – open 1NT. If you open 1D and partner rebids 1S, you'll be stuck for an accurate rebid.