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 □KT853 □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
     o You won’t always guess right!
   - There are three chances for four tricks (not likely, but possible)
     o □QJ □7432
     o □Q □J7432
     o □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**

   a. Partner’s honors should be “working” – lying in a favorable spot
   b. KT7 AT942 85 942 (7 HCP)
      b.i. If partner opens 1NT, transfer to hearts and pass
      b.ii. 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**

   a. Marginal two level overcalls are especially dangerous
   b. If LHO raises RHO’s suit, this improves your hand substantially

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

   a. 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.