

YES, NO or MAYBE
A LOGICAL APPROACH TO BRIDGE



BIDDING BASICS

DAVID GLANDORF

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The *Yes, No or Maybe* series is dedicated to my father
Oscar Glandorf
an elementary school teacher
from whom I must have inherited my love of teaching.

Other books in the *Yes, No or Maybe* series

Introduction and Card Play Basics

Introduction and Card Play Basics Workbook

Bidding Basics Workbook

More Bidding Basics

More Bidding Basics Workbook

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

Yes, No or Maybe is designed to teach beginning players the fundamental concepts of contract bridge. While it can be used as a self-study resource by a student with some understanding of the game of bridge, the intent is that it be used in a classroom format with an experienced teacher.

CONTENT

Yes, No or Maybe is a series of three textbooks, each with an associated workbook. Each textbook has 13 chapters plus an Index of Terms. Each chapter is designed for one three-hour lesson. *Yes, No or Maybe* therefore provides a resource for approximately a one-year series of classes meeting weekly with some time off for holidays, short breaks or personal (teacher) scheduling factors.

Each workbook also has 13 chapters with several exercises for the associated textbook chapter and most chapters include practice deals. The exercises can be done in the classroom, assigned as homework or divided between these two activities.

Each textbook/workbook can be used for a single 13-week course or divided approximately equally between two courses.

Introduction and Card Play Basics covers the mechanics of the game, a little bridge history, scoring, hand valuation and preferred contracts, along with the basics of declarer play and defense. No bidding is included here but MiniBridge or a variant is used for sample and practice deals. The Yes, No, Maybe bidding concepts are introduced for the determination of preferred contracts even though no real bidding is involved. The associated workbook includes a set of supplemental scoring exercises for both duplicate and rubber bridge.

Bidding Basics introduces the student to bidding including opening bids at the one level with responses and rebids, overcalls and takeout doubles with advances and rebids, the use of cuebids by responder and advancer and the practical application of the Law of Total Tricks. This textbook also includes an appendix containing some of the basic bridge information provided in *Introduction and Card Play Basics*.

In *More Bidding Basics* the student learns about balancing, several conventions (Stayman, Jacoby transfers, negative doubles, fourth suit forcing, new minor forcing), strong opening bids, preemptive opening bids and overcalls, game tries, slam bidding (direct, Blackwood, Gerber, control bidding) and opening the bidding in third or fourth chair.

The basic material presented in these volumes is not new; in fact, books on fundamental card play and bidding in contract bridge have been around for about a century. What is new is the organization and methodology. To the best of my knowledge the *Yes, No or Maybe* approach to bidding decisions presented herein is unique in the world of teaching bridge. Finally, while MiniBridge has been around for some time, I don't know that it has previously been worked into a complete framework for teaching beginners of all ages.

Be forewarned that there is a tremendous amount of information in the two bidding books. While some of the content may be considered to be more intermediate-level material, every bridge player needs to have at least a rudimentary understanding of all the basic elements of bridge. In the classroom it is possible to play in a controlled environment using deals that are set up to illustrate the topic of the day. When playing in the real world you will frequently encounter situations that were not considered in practice deals. The details included herein should provide a handy reference for many, but by no means all, of these puzzling scenarios.

Several different bidding systems, each with several variations plus optional partnership agreements, exist in today's bridge world. One of the most common systems in current use is Standard American – 5-card majors, which is used in the *Yes, No or Maybe* series. The method of presenting this system differs significantly from that used in other textbooks because of its emphasis on logic rather than memorization. Nonetheless, you will be compatible with anyone who plays this system even if your partner is unfamiliar with this way of thinking.

BACKGROUND

After several years of teaching beginner and intermediate bridge using the ACBL Bridge Series, I realized that students with limited past experience struggled significantly with the task of simultaneously learning the intricacies of bidding, playing the cards as declarer, and reasonably defending a deal. In particular, I observed that the demands of learning the fundamentals of bidding often adversely impacted their ability to study and comprehend the fundamentals of declarer play and defense.

I concluded that part of the problem was that the students were trying to learn how to bid using a memorization process rather than a logical sequential thought process. This realization came from the multitude of questions in the form “How many points do I need to make that bid?” or “How many points does that bid show?”

Many years ago as I worked with new players in a social environment, the idea of teaching the card play aspects of bridge before addressing bidding germinated in the back of my mind. Then a few years ago I was introduced to the concept of MiniBridge and found out that I was not the only person who was aware of the challenges of learning bidding and card play simultaneously and that someone else had actually done something about it.

About the same time, I began to present the basic bidding topics from the ACBL series in a somewhat different manner from the traditional approach. My method consists of (1) formulating a few basic questions, the answers to which are always “Yes”, “No” or “Maybe” and (2) using the answers, along with some other guidelines and rules, to make bidding decisions. This required my students to make mental adjustments/conversions as they studied their student textbooks. I received much positive feedback from my students, perhaps best summarized by a comment from one of my students who had been with me for about two years: “*Yes, No or Maybe* will take you a long way.” At the same time, I found myself apologizing to them for having to convert from the textbook approach to my approach. Eventually many of them suggested that I just write my own book.

I initially just rolled my eyes at their suggestion but in 2009 I decided to take their advice. The result was the first draft of my *Yes, No or Maybe* bidding books. This bidding book maintained the overall approach of starting new students with bidding concepts but referred them to the ACBL series bidding book for introductory play and defense topics. In the fall of 2011 I wrote the first draft of *Introduction and Card Play Basics* and in January of 2012 began using it for my introductory course for new students. Eventually the bidding book expanded and split into *Bidding Basics* and *More Bidding Basics*.

NOTATIONAL ISSUES

I realize that the modern style of writing is one of gender neutrality. While I understand the social implications of this style, I personally feel it makes for very awkward reading at times. I have found a way around this for much of this series. Opener and intervener (overcaller or takeout doubler) are assigned the masculine gender while responder and advancer (partner of the intervener) are assigned the feminine gender. When reference is made to a player outside of any of these roles the traditional masculine style is used.

Here are a few notational issues:

- I sometimes use M to represent either major suit, e.g., 4M for a contract of either 4♥ or 4♠.
- I sometimes use m to represent either minor suit, e.g., 3m for a contract of either 3♣ or 3♦.
- I sometimes use N and sometimes use NT to denote a notrump contract, e.g., 3N and 3NT both denote a contract of three notrump.
- The result of a contract that is made is written as LSD+N where L is the level of the contract, S is the strain of the contract, D is the declarer compass position and N is the number of tricks above **book** that were taken, e.g., 3SS+4 is written for a contract of 3♠ by South for which 10 tricks were taken.
- The result of a contract that is defeated is written as LSD-N where L, S and D are the same as above and N is the number of tricks the **contract**

was defeated, e.g., 2NW-1 is written for a contract of 2NT by West that was defeated by 1 trick.

- Bold italics is used to identify the first introduction of a bridge term and that term is included in the Index of Terms.
- Bold is used for major emphasis.
- A player's position relative to another is often denoted by LHO (left-hand opponent) or RHO (right-hand opponent).
- Distribution of the four suits in a hand without regard to specific suits is written in the form "i-j-k-l" where each letter represents a number 0-13 with $i \geq j \geq k \geq l$, e.g., 5-3-3-2 represents a hand with 5 cards in one suit, 3 cards in each of two suits, and 2 cards in one suit with specific suits unspecified. Equals signs (=) replace the dashes when the distribution of the cards with regard to specific suits is desired, with the corresponding suits identified in decreasing rank from left to right, e.g., 3=5=1=4 designates a hand with 3 spades, 5 hearts, 1 diamond and 4 clubs.
- Sections and topics: A major division of a chapter is referred to as a section while a division of a section is referred to as a topic. Sections are identified by large, bold, all caps, centered titles. Topics are identified by medium, bold, left-justified titles with first letters of significant words capitalized.

I truly hope that you will find these books helpful in your journey into the wonderful world of bridge.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My greatest debt of gratitude must go to my students. I could not have written this book without their encouragement and cooperation in putting up with the experimentation of my approach to teaching them this game we all love.

Second, many thanks go to Audrey Grant and Betty Starzec who wrote and updated the ACBL Bridge Series which made it easy to start teaching bridge and provided the background for much of the content of this Series. In addition I owe so much to the other great players and authors whose works were such valuable resources for this endeavor. They are listed in the next section.

Third, I must thank two of my students who are also editors, Diane Cuttler and Leah Marchand, for the numerous hours they put into proofreading and editing the text along with their many suggestions for improving its readability. In this regard thanks are also due to Ray Lee of Master Point Press for his helpful suggestions regarding layout and formatting. Thanks also go to Sally Sparrow of Master Point Press for getting my copy ready for press and Ebook distribution.

Finally, special thanks go to my wife, Becky, who is not a bridge player but knows enough about the game to listen to my bridge stories and is willing to provide help with my class preparation and writing when I need it.

RESOURCES AND PERMISSIONS

Several books were invaluable resources for writing the *Yes, No or Maybe* series, and this author is deeply indebted to those authors for their contributions to bridge education. Of particular importance were the following five books in the ACBL Bridge Series originally written by Audrey Grant and later revised by Betty Starzec:

1. *Bidding in the 21st Century*, Baron Barclay, Louisville, KY, © 1990, Updated 2006
2. *Play of the Hand in the 21st Century*, Baron Barclay, Louisville, KY, © 1988, 2002, Revised April 2007
3. *Defense in the 21st Century*, 2nd Edition, Baron Barclay, Louisville, KY, © 1988, 2002, Revised October 2007
4. *Commonly Used Conventions in the 21st Century*, Baron Barclay, Louisville, KY, © 2001, Revised 2008
5. *More Commonly Used Conventions in the 21st Century*, Baron Barclay, Louisville, KY, © 2001, Revised January 2008

I used these books for several years when I first started teaching and was heavily influenced by them while writing the *Yes, No or Maybe* series. Most of the chapters in the *Yes, No or Maybe* workbooks include many sample deals for practice in the classroom or at home. All of these deals have been extracted from the above five books and are used with the permission of the American Contract Bridge League (www.acbl.org). Special “EZ-Deal” decks of cards for these deals are available from Baron Barclay Bridge Supply (www.baronbarclay.com).

Commentary in *Bidding Basics*, Chapter 9 – “Overcalls and Advances - Part 1” relating to the Law of Total Tricks was drawn from Larry Cohen’s book:

6. *To Bid or Not to Bid – The Law of Total Tricks*, Natco Press, Boca Raton, FL © 1992.

The following book by Max Hardy was influential in my presentation of the opening bid of 2♣ and responses thereto in *More Bidding Basics*, Chapter 6 – “Strong Opening Bids:”

7. *Two Over One Game Force*, Devyn Press Inc., Louisville, KY, © 1989

My treatment of weak two-bids and other preemptive bids, as well as their use in third and fourth seat in *More Bidding Basics*, Chapter 7 – “Preemptive Opening Bids and Overcalls,” Chapter 12 – “Opening the Bidding in Third or Fourth Chair - Part 1” and Chapter 13 – “Opening the Bidding in Third or Fourth Chair - Part 2” was drawn primarily from the following book by Ron Anderson and Sabine Zenkel:

8. *Preempts from A to Z*, Magnus Books, Stamford, CN, © 1996

While the ACBL Series includes a chapter on negative doubles, that material was supplemented by information gleaned from the following book by Marty Bergen devoted to this single topic for *More Bidding Basics*, Chapter 11 – “Negative Doubles.”

9. Points Schmoints Series, *Negative Doubles*, Magnus Books, Stamford, CN, © 2000

Most of the content on balancing in Chapter 1 – “Balancing,” Chapter 2 - “Advances after a Balancing Double or Bid” and “Chapter 3 – “Rebids after a Balancing Double or Bid” of *More Bidding Basics* was based on the following book by Mike Lawrence:

10. *The Complete Book on Balancing in Contract Bridge -- Revised Edition*, Baron Barclay Bridge Supply, Louisville, KY, © 2012

Many of the sample hands were extracted from this book and used with the permission of Mike Lawrence and Baron Barclay Bridge Supply.

The above five books are highly recommended for further reading once you become comfortable with the material presented in *Yes, No or Maybe*.

The bridge history presented in *Introduction and Card Play Basics*, Chapter 1 – “Getting Started” and the Bridge Essentials portion of the Appendix of *Bidding Basics* was derived almost entirely from the following book written by Charles Goren and the editors of Sports Illustrated:

11. *The Sports Illustrated Book of Bridge*, Chancellor Hall Ltd., NY, NY, © 1961

Additional information included in the bridge history material came from private communication with Julian Laderman who so graciously read that portion of a draft of the book and provided a few corrections and enhancements.



CHAPTER 1

- Bidding Objectives

Introduction

The Golden Rules

Hand Valuation

Modus Operandi

Role Playing

Opening the Bidding

Bidding Messages

Summary



INTRODUCTION

Goals

There are two goals to the game of bridge. The first is of an entertainment nature – to have fun. If you don't enjoy playing this game, give it up and take up some other activity for your leisure time. The second is of a competitive nature – to score more points than your opponents. Most bridge players find they usually have more fun when they score more points than their opponents.

Game Stages

You are already familiar with the mechanics of the game of bridge, but for discussion purposes it is helpful to divide a deal into four stages:

- The *shuffle and deal*
- The *auction*
- The *play*
- The *scoring*

This book will deal primarily with the second stage, the auction. Issues regarding declarer play will be addressed only as they relate to specific practice deals. There will be some discussion of defensive play as it relates to the bidding and practice deals.

You will have great difficulty accomplishing the second goal of bridge if you do not understand scoring. Furthermore, you will have a hard time understanding many of the bidding ideas presented later in this book if you don't see how they relate to scoring.

***Understanding scoring is the most important
factor in learning to play Bridge.***

If you do not know how to keep score, please study the Appendix before proceeding further. All deals in this book will be scored.

Bidding Strategies

When your side has most of the strength (high cards and long suits) the deal “belongs” to your side. You should be able to take more tricks than the opponents. In this case you want to maximize your score by bidding and making partscore, game, or slam contracts. Your usual objective is to get to a game contract so that you can get the game bonus in duplicate bridge or increase your chance of winning a rubber in rubber bridge. But on a grander scale you can score even more points if you can bid up to the slam level and get those bonuses too. Bidding to achieve these goals can be considered *offensive bidding*.

On the other hand, when your opponents have the majority of the strength and the deal “belongs” to them, you would like to minimize their score. From a

bidding perspective there are two ways to do this. One way is to make your own bids so they interfere with the opponents bidding and keep them from finding their optimum contract. Another way is to bid more than you think you can make, if the defensive points your opponents get for setting you are fewer than they would have received for bidding and making their contract. Clearly, knowing the cost for going set is just as important as knowing the reward you will receive if you make your contract. This is one concept that adds excitement to the game as each pair battles for a contract that they think will give them the best result. Bidding to achieve these goals can be considered *defensive bidding*.

Sometimes the hand strengths of the two sides are nearly equal and it is hard to tell during the auction which side is stronger. In these cases both partnerships are usually competing for the contract, not sure if the hand really belongs to them or their opponents.

Most of the bidding presented in this book is of the offensive nature. Nevertheless, the way it fits in with defensive bidding must always be kept in mind. Beginning bridge players often lose sight of the true competitive object of this game which is not to always make your contract or maximize the number of tricks you take but rather to

Score more points than your opponents.

To accomplish this you want to try to

- *Maximize your score.*
- *Minimize your opponents' score.*

In rubber bridge and the duplicate team games you are ultimately concerned only with your raw score – that which you record at the end of a deal. When that is the case your bidding decision is often based on how much you have to gain or lose by making certain bids or reaching various contracts. When you have a close decision to make regarding a game or slam contract, you usually tend to be aggressive/optimistic and make the bid that will give you the most points because that is important. Taking the risk of bidding to a game contract so that you will receive an extra 300 or 500 points (duplicate scoring) or win a rubber (or at least reaching the vulnerable state) versus giving the opponents 50 or 100 points if you fail to make your contract is very worthwhile. When you are playing in a partscore contract and you have a choice of two options, you are more likely to take the safest route, one that is most likely to make. For example, if you have a choice of playing in 3♦ or 2NT and you can determine that 3♦ is safer than 2NT, you would choose the 3♦ bid even though that would be worth only 60 trick points while the 2NT bid would give you 70 trick points. It is much better to take your “sure” 60 points than try for an extra 10 points at the risk of being set and giving the opponents 50 or 100 points (depending on your vulnerability).

In matchpoint play your raw score is rather insignificant. What is important is your score compared to the other pairs that held the same cards as you and your partner. Now your bidding decisions are based on the frequency of success rather than how much you have to gain or lose on a raw score basis. When you have a close decision to make regarding a game contract versus a partscore, you might well settle for the partscore if you think the game contract will be set more than half the time. Similarly, with respect to the partscore decision in the previous paragraph, you might well decide on the 2NT contract if you think it will make more than half the time. How do you decide on the percentages? Mostly through experience. So get out and play as much as you can.

The primary reason for presenting this information is that this aspect of making a bidding decision will crop up throughout the remainder of this book.

Auction Classification

Sometimes the strength of one side is so dominant that their opponents cannot risk entering the auction for fear of giving the dominant partnership more defensive points than the offensive points they would receive if left to play offensively. Under these conditions the dominant partnership will have the bidding all to themselves. This type of auction is called an *uncontested auction*.

On other deals it might not be clear which side has the majority of the strength and both sides will be competing for the contract. This type of auction is called a *contested auction* or a *competitive auction*.

About half of this book is devoted to uncontested auctions. But even when considering those auctions the above ideas of offensive bidding versus defensive bidding must be kept in mind.

Learning the Game of Bridge

As you continue your bridge adventure, it might be helpful if you compare learning this game with working a giant jigsaw puzzle. We can't fill in all the pieces at once but start with a framework and then build on that to fill in more pieces. Many jigsaw puzzles have certain features you might concentrate on and so does bridge. Here is a partial outline:

- Bidding
 - Opening Bids
 - Responses
 - Rebids
 - Competitive Bids
 - Slam Bidding
- Declarer Play
 - Play in Notrump Contracts
 - Play in Suit Contracts
- Defense
 - Opening Leads
 - Third Hand Play
 - Second Hand Play
 - Defensive Strategies
 - Signaling
- Scoring
 - Duplicate bridge
 - Rubber bridge
- Rules – What should be done when someone
 - Bids out of turn
 - Makes an insufficient bid
 - Makes an opening lead out of turn
 - Plays to a trick out of turn
- Proprieties
 - Proper etiquette at the table
 - Kibitzing (watching others play as a spectator)
 - Ethics

The Truth, the Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth?

Not quite! As described above, learning this game is like working a jigsaw puzzle. You have to start someplace and build on it. Most of the time it is best to focus on a particular area for a while and not get distracted with how all the different areas hook together. That often requires the presentation material to omit various exceptions to the “rules.” It is quite appropriate to use this material as “gospel” with your peers. But be cautious when discussing what you learn here with advanced players who may tell you something different. It is all right to respond with the retort “Well, the book says ... ,” but be willing to listen to their comments and see if they are reasonable when looking at the big picture.

THE GOLDEN RULES

The Golden Games

You know that you can receive a substantial bonus if you bid to a game level and make the contract. But you also know that you have to take more tricks in the minor suits than the majors or notrump. More specifically,

- For a minor suit game contract you must bid to the 5 level committing to 11 tricks and allowing your opponents only 2.
- For a Major Suit game contract you must bid to the 4 level committing to 10 tricks and allowing your opponents 3.
- For a notrump contract you must bid to the 3 level committing to only 9 tricks and allowing your opponents 4.

So you would be led to believe that your choice of strain is always prioritized as notrump, Major Suit, minor suit. While that is logical it is not quite true. A little later in this chapter we will learn why it is actually Major Suit, notrump, minor suit. For now we can be content to conclude that minor suit game contracts are the least desirable because they are the most difficult to make. Certainly 3NT is preferred to 5m. We can then state that most of the time our game bonuses will come from the

Golden Games

3NT, 4♥, 4♠

The Golden Fit

When should you consider playing in a trump suit as opposed to a notrump contract? Suppose that you could determine that between your hand and partner's you had 7 cards in a suit. Would that possibly be a good trump fit? It depends partly on how those 7 cards were divided between you and partner. If they were divided 7-0, it would probably work out all right. Even a 5-2 division might not be too bad. But, what if they were divided 4-3? The opponents have 6 cards and they will usually not divide 3-3, so one of them will likely have at least 4 trumps. If you play your 4 trumps to extract all of theirs, provided they divide 4-2, you will be out of trumps and play the remainder of the hand in notrump. These contracts do sometimes work out well. In fact, they were a favorite of an expert of years gone by, Alphonse Moyses, and are known as Moysian fits. Nonetheless, for the beginning player you will find it much more comfortable playing in a suit contract when you have a

Golden Fit

A partnership holding of 8 or more cards in a suit.

With fewer cards in a suit you will usually want to play in a notrump contract.

Which Golden Game?

From the previous two topics we know that we prefer to play in 3NT if we decide we want to be in a game contract and do not have a Golden Fit in a Major Suit. But, how do we decide on the contract if both 3NT and 4♥ or 4♠ are options? It might seem that 3NT should be the choice because that requires fewer tricks. That argument certainly has merit and is often the preference of some experts; however there is another school of thought. Remember that when you are bidding at the game level you are bidding from an offensive viewpoint and want to maximize your score. So another point that has been demonstrated by others needs to be considered.

If you have a Golden Fit, you can usually take one more trick with that suit as trumps than you can in a notrump contract.

4M Preferred over 3NT

This postulate says that if you can make 3NT (100 trick points) you can also make 4M (120 trick points). So you get 20 more points in the Major Suit contract than the notrump contract. These 20 points are not much to quibble over in a rubber bridge game or a duplicate team game. But in a duplicate matchpoint game it can make a significant difference. If you are in the notrump game just making it, and everyone else with your cards is making the Major Suit game, you just got a big fat ZERO for your matchpoints on that board. On the other hand, if you were making the Major Suit game and everyone else is just making the notrump game you got an absolute top on that board.

It is true that there are times when you will not get the extra trick in the suit contract. Then either 3NT makes while 4M goes down, or 4M makes and 3NT makes with an overtrick giving those players a score of 430 against your 420. Regardless, you lose. There are experts who are very good at deciding which course of action is best in these situations. When you get to be that good you can write your own bidding book. Until then go with the conventional wisdom and take the Major Suit contract.

Partscore Contracts

The arguments presented in the previous topic for choosing a Golden Game in a Major Suit over notrump also apply to partscore contracts.

The advantages of a Major Suit contract over a minor suit contract are also obvious from the higher trick score value of a Major Suit over a minor suit.

Comparison of a minor suit contract to a notrump contract is not quite so obvious and depends on the contract level. Working on the assumption that you can take one more trick in a suit contract than in notrump when you have a Golden Fit leads to a draw if you compare a 1NT+1 (40 trick points) contract to a

2m+2 (40 trick points) contract. Here you might well decide to play in the minor suit if you think it is a safer contract.

For higher-level contracts notrump is always a winner. For example 2NT+2 (70 trick points) versus 3m+3 (60 trick points). Obviously 3NT+3 is significantly better than 4m+4 since you will receive the game bonus for the notrump contract but not the minor suit contract.

While you will usually prefer a notrump contract to a minor suit the exception is on hands where you decide the minor suit contract is safer than a notrump contract. This will happen more often in a contested auction than an uncontested auction.

HAND VALUATION

The strength of a hand is partly determined by its high cards and long suits. If there is a trump suit and you do not have any cards in a plain suit that was led, you may be able to win the trick by ruffing it with one of your trump cards. Short suits can also be an asset.

You also know that when your side has most of the strength you would like to bid as high as possible up to a game or even a slam contract level if you think the contracts may be makeable, so that you can be rewarded with those bonus points. When the hand belongs to the opponents, you would like to be competitive and maybe push them to a higher level where they can be defeated or even take a sacrifice by overbidding and letting them set you if that will give them fewer points than making their own contract. Of course, you can't bid willy-nilly because the opponents may double you and you could be severely punished on the score sheet for such irrational behavior.

High-Card Points

Points assigned to the top four honor cards in each suit are called *high-card points* (HCP). These are assigned on a 4-3-2-1 basis as follows:

High-Card Points			
A - 4	K - 3	Q - 2	J - 1

If you add up all of the HCP in a suit you find there are 10 HCP in each suit. Since there are 4 suits, there is a total of 40 HCP in the entire deck.

You will be spending a lot of time adding up the HCP in your hand. Some players find it helpful to realize they have 10 HCP whenever they see one of each of the top 4 cards in their hand even if they are not all in the same suit. So, for example, an ace and jack in one suit plus a king and queen in another suit add up to 10 HCP. With a little practice you may find it helpful to recognize other combinations such as: A + J = 5, K + Q = 5, Q + Q = 4, K + J = 4. Again, the combination of the suit or suits is immaterial.

High cards are valuable regardless of whether you are declarer, dummy or defender. You must

Always count high-card points.

Long-Suit Points

Long suits (5⁺ cards) are usually assets to your hand. If your partner has some cards in the same suit in his hand, you can usually play that suit a few times (2 or 3) and exhaust the cards in that suit from the opponents. Then whatever cards you have left in that suit will be the only remaining cards and you will be able to take tricks with them. This idea is valid for a notrump contract and suit contracts when that suit is trump or when that suit is played as a side suit once you draw the opponents' trump cards. In other words it is valid regardless of the strain of the contract.

Long-suit points are allocated as follows:

Long-Suit Points

Add 1 point for each card in excess of 4 in each suit.

There are two easy ways to count long suit points. One is simply to subtract 4 from the length of each suit containing 5⁺ cards and add these up. The second is to mentally slide 4 cards in each long suit to the side and count the remaining cards. Whichever method suits your taste is fine. Or, you can use your own devices. Whatever you do, do it discreetly so neither your partner nor your opponents are tipped off to your holding.

Even though long suits are almost always assets, there are some restrictions on their use.

Count long suit points when:

- *You know or think you will be declarer in a suit contract, or*
- *You know you will be dummy in a notrump contract, or*
- *You opened the bidding with one of a suit and are rebidding 2N or 3N*

Do not count long suit points when you are opening the bidding at any level in notrump.

Short-Suit Points

Short suits (fewer than 3 cards) may be an asset or a liability, depending on the strain of the contract. Their greatest asset is when you are the dummy in a suit contract. Consequently, they are called *dummy points* and assigned the following values:

Dummy Points
Void - 5 Singleton - 3 Doubleton - 1

Short suits are always a liability rather than an asset in a notrump contract. If you are short in a suit, there are more cards for the opponents to hold in that suit, suggesting that your shortness is an asset for your opponents. Their asset is your liability. So, never give yourself any extra points for a short suit when you think or know you will be playing in a notrump contract.

Short suits have their greatest significance when you are going to be the dummy in a suit contract and have at least 3-card trump support for your partner. Then your partner (declarer) may be able to use your trumps to ruff some of his losers in that suit.

If you know you have a Golden Fit in a Major Suit you know that if your side wins the bidding contest the final contract will be in that suit. If you will be the dummy and have at least 3-card support for partner's suit you can count dummy points.

Now let's suppose you have support for a minor suit first bid by partner and a short side suit. During the auction it is quite possible, maybe even probable, that the strain of the final contract will be notrump rather than the minor suit. If you were to add points to your hand for dummy points you would have overvalued your hand if the final contract was notrump. What you thought was an asset turned out to be a liability. This could easily lead to a disappointing result. So, don't add dummy points when you have support for partner's minor suit unless a notrump contract has been ruled out.

These conclusions are summarized below.

Count dummy points when:

- *You are dummy in a suit contract and*
- *You have at least 3-card trump support and*
 - *Your partner's suit is a major, or*
 - *A notrump contract is not an option*

You may have learned the assignment of short suit points as 3-2-1 instead of 5-3-1. For the purpose of opening the bidding Goren did use the 3-2-1 values but he did not count for long suit points. However, as dummy, even Goren used 5-3-1; you may just never have become aware of that.

Adjustments

You have just been given a method for evaluating the strength of your hand. The points assigned for various features are not an exact science but approximations. Sometimes it is appropriate to make actual numerical adjustments to the values given previously and other times you should simply make a judgment decision.