

HAND EVALUATION
OPENING ONE OF A SUIT
 Summary - Improving Level



Opening at the one level promises a good bit better than average “Trick-Taking Potential”.¹

Any 13 HCP hand can meet this promise - less than 13 is known as a Borderline Hand.

12 HCP – almost always, 11 HCP often, 10 HCP sometimes, 9 HCP occasionally, 8 HCP rarely.²

High Card points is a shortcut for assessing strength only A = 4, K = 3, Q = 2, J = 1.

It is not disputed that the real value of high cards is more like 4.5, 3, 1.5 and ½ but who wants to add fractions? In the good old days it was 3-2-1- ½.

HCP are the best means of evaluating your hand for opening despite they can overinflate or undervalue. Do not ever lose sight of HCP, however a means of accounting for distribution and other features is also needed.

Assessing a Borderline Hand for opening

Beginning players have to start somewhere. Usually they are taught HCP + Length Points and/or a basic Rule of 20.

These methods account for strength and length but not certain other features. As players gain experience they look for more accurate methods.

Other methods - balancing accuracy with ease

- ※ Slightly more accurate is Bergen’s -3 or the “Rule of 22” which accounts for Quick Tricks
 - ※ More accurate again is Bergen’s **ADJUSTED RULE OF 20** which this lesson introduces
 - ※ Advanced methods include Zar Points, Klinger Points, Bergen Points etc
- The harder the calculations the more accurate but we have to be realistic.
 No calculators allowed at the table and we only have less than a minute or so to decide.

ADJUSTED RULE OF 20 - accounts for length, strength and downgrade or upgrade features

Begin with the basic Rule of 20 and adjust the score – see Coaster and Handout

Negative Features

- ※ Honours isolated rather than combined **-1 for dubious Honours**
- ※ Aceless hands **-1 for an Aceless hand**
- ※ Quack Hands **-1 for a hand where 50+% of HCP are made up of Queens and Jacks**

Positive Features

- ※ Honours combined in long suits **+1 for very good honours snuggled together in a long suit**
- ※ Quick Tricks **+1 if your hand has at least 2½ Quick Tricks**
- ※ Spot cards usefully combined **+1 if the hand has two useful 10’s**

✓ **OPEN if the answer still comes to 20+**

Calculate any downgrades first. If the answer is still 20 then no need to calculate the pluses.

Quick Tricks – Worth learning over time as they can come into other areas of your Bridge.

Weak and Pre-emptive hands – Use the same calculation. Check that you really are Weak.

¹ 3rd and 4th seat can be different - partner could assume this promise, though, until shown otherwise.

² In Australia a Green system must have at least 8 HCP to open (Green is what most of us play) – see *ABF Regs*.