Simple Fit Points – A Must

By Neil H. Timm

In his 1970 book "Win at bridge with Jacoby Modern" included some caveats for the Jacoby 2NT bid.
   (a) The 13+ points (i.e., fit points) should include at least 11HCP
   (b) Three card support is acceptable provided the major suit contains at least 2 of the top 3 trumps suit honors.

Why the caveats? Jacoby was talking about "Fit Points" which are more than HCPs!

If you play 1NT forcing when you respond to partner's 1M bid you have 7-12 HCP and normally only 0-2 cards in the bid major. YES – No Fit! However, responding to a major suit bid with a fit you have 3/4+cards in partner's suit so must now count fit points when responding to the major suit bid – Or, yes more than just HCP!

How do you now evaluate your hand? You must now ADD to your HCPs: (1) Major Fit Points with Trump Quality, (2) Length and (3) Trump Distribution Fit Points.

Major Fit Points with Quality

8-card Fit: +1 Point   9-card Fit: +2 points   10-card fit +3 points

+1 point for honor(s) **with a Fit** if honor(s) (initial count) < 4 points (i.e., K/Q/J/K10/QJ/J10). Yes, **you add another Quality point.** But with 4333 distributions subtract 1 point.

Note: These rules/points apply to ALL suit and ALL contracts (suit or NT).

Length Points and Quality

5-card suit (headed by QK or K only): +1 point   6-card suit: +2 Points

Any 6-card suit without QJ/K: +1point

7-card suit (or longer): +2 points for each card **from the 7th onward**

Quality Points: 3+honors in 5-card suit: +1-point   3+honors in 6-card suit: +2

Distribution Fit Points with the Trump Fit

Number of trumps:		4	3	2
Trump Distribution Fit Points	Void:	4pts	3pts	2pts
	Singleton:	3pts	2pts	1pts
	Doubleton:	2pts	1pts	0pts

We consider a few examples with fit only adjustments in Trump suit

With Kxx major support You add +1 for 3-card fit and +1 for King so 3HCP becomes 5pts

With Axx support You add +1 for 3-card fit (No Quality since HCP=4) or 5 Fit total pts

Note with 4-card support each of the above become 6 Fit points – add+1 for 4-card fit

With QJx support You add +1 for 3-card fit and +1 for QJ count<4 add+1or 5pt total

With J10x support You add +1 for 3-card support and +1 for J10<4 add +1 or 3 total pts

Let's now add Length to Trump suit in the calculation!

Kxxxx support now becomes 6Fit points since add+1 for 5th card or 3=King and 3=10-card fit

Next support we have another suit – Not trump suit but a good 5-card Quality suit like KQJxx with 6HCP.

To these 6HCP we add +1 for Length (5-cards) + 1 for 3 honors or total = 8 points total. You DO NOT add fit points to this suit unless later in the bidding you find out that partner has 3-cards in the minor.

Note after you support partner's major suit the opening bidder re-evaluates his hand for fit and distribution.

<u>Without</u> a fit Partner's distribution is now evaluated using the following rules:

<u>Distribution Points</u>

Void: 4 pts   **Singleton:** 2 pts   **<u>One</u> doubleton: 0 pts**   **2 doubletons:** 1pt

4333 Distributions: -1 pt   A singleton A/K/Q in NT contract: -1 pt

So, partner must always re-evaluate his hand based upon the bidding considering both distribution and fit.

Example:

North: ♠KQxxx ♥AJx ♦Qxxx ♣x

South   ♠Axx ♥xx ♦xxxx ♣AJ10x

North has 12HCP and South has 9HCP for a total of 21HCP.

The bidding may go:

1♠   2♠
Pass

Or some may bid 4♦ as a HSGT/LSGT bid with 2-losers

1♠   2♠
3♦   3♠
Pass

The pair missed game! What went wrong?

Counting HCP and Length North has 13(H+L) playing points and South has 11Fit points (9HCP+1 for 3-spades +1 for heart doubleton).

However, with a fit the singleton club adds 2 points so now North has 15 fit points upon re-evaluation and playing SSGT bids 3♣* (Short Suit Game Try bid). With length in clubs and ruffing values in spades and 11 fit points, South bids 4♠ finding the game!

The above is a simple approach to hand evaluation and re-evaluation using fit points in a straight forward manor and the 4-3-2-1 system of counting.

The approach may be improved upon using the Optimal Point Count Method which I have discussed in previous bridge tips. A summary Follows.

Optimal Point Count (OPC) - Summary

The Opening bidder considers HLD points and Responder's only HL points where L≤2 w/o a fit except for flatness -1 4333. With a suit Fit, add/deduct F, Semi-Fit, Distribution-Fit, MS: (HLDF).

HONOR POINTS (H)
Ace: 4½ pts	K: 3pts	Q w/A, K, J: 2 pts	Qxx: 1½ pts	Qx=1pt
		J w/A, K, Q: 1pt	Jxx: ½ pts	Jx=0 pts

Value of **10s** vary: 10K=½, 10A=0, 10Q/J=1, 10J=2
No Aces = -1 pt (Only Opener) No Q =-1 No K=-1 (all hands) with Max=-2
 3Ks = +1 pt, 4Ks = +2pts, 4Qs = +1pt

For 3 of the top 5 honors (**suit Quality**) in a 5-card suit add +1 pt and in a 6-card suit add +2 pts.
For a Singleton honor or for **TWO** Honor doubletons (AK/AQ/KQ/QJ deduct -1 pt
However, DO NOT deduct a point for an AJ/KJ doubleton since they are better than Ax and Kx.

LENGTH POINTS (L)

For a suit headed with at least 3 points (QJ/K) and 5-cards add +1 pt and for 6-cards add +2 pts Suit Quality (Q). A 6-card suit without 3 points add only +1 pt.
Add +2 pts for **each point** from the 7th-card on in any 7+ card suit – Length alone has value.

DISTRIBUTION POINTS (D)

VOID = 4pts   Singleton= 2 points **ONE** doubleton= 0 pts **TWO** doubletons = 1pt
4333 = -1pt
Singleton in a NT contract = -1pt

The values defined for HLD apply to Opener's hands for both NT and Suit contracts. Responder adds D points once any suit fit is found.

SUIT FIT POINTS (F)

8/9/10 card fit= +1/2/3 pts (all suits)

+1 point for honor(s) **with a Fit** if honor(s) (initial count) < 4 points (i.e., K/Q/J/K10/QJ/J10)

SEMI-FIT (SF)

Add +1 if you hold an honor doubleton Kx/Qx/J10/Jx doubleton (other than the Ace) in partners long suit (5+cards). Both the opener and the responder make the +1-point adjustment with 2-card suit support.

DISTRIBUTION-FIT (DF)

Number of trumps	4	3	2
Void	4pts	3pts	2pts
Singleton	3pts	2pts	1pts
Doubleton	2pts	1pts	0pts

MISFIT POINTS (MF)

Opposite a long 5-card suit deduct -3/-2/-1 for void /singleton/doubleton
With a Fit, add F, Semi-Fit, Distribution-Fit, and MS pts called (HLDF) points.

WASTED HONOR (WH) ADJUSTMENTS where S=Singleton and V=Void
K/Q/J Honors opposite a S/V -2/-3 Non-Honors opposite S/V +2/+3
Ace opposite Singleton= +1

MIRROR HAND/SUIT (MHS) ADJUSTMENTS
For two perfectly mirror hands or two mirror suits deduct -2 points/-1 point.

One more example – A test of Fit!

North: ♠KQxxx ♥AJxx ♦A ♣xxx

South   ♠AJxx ♥xx ♦xxxx ♣J10x

Only half the field in the Villages reached the 4♠ game.

Most pairs bid:

1♠   2♠
Pass

Why? South did not use Fit points!

Using the OPC method South has 11.5 fit points (**H**=6.5+**D**=2+**F**=2+1=3) and should bid 3♠ (limit raise) not 2♠.

North with a fit and re-evaluation has 16 Fit points and would bid 4♠ hearing the limit raise.

North opened 1♠ with 6 pts for Spades (H+L) + 5.5 for AJ + 3.5 for A or 15 points using the OPC Method and added 1more point for the ♠Q with the fit in spades.