

May 20th - Rule of 20 Opening Bid

You pick up this hand when you are first to bid:

♠ A K 8 7 5

♥ J 6 3

♦ 4

♣ K 10 9 8

Can you open the bidding? Based on points you can't as you only have 11 but using the rule of 20 means you can. The total length of your two longest suits (Spades and Clubs) is nine cards. Add this to the eleven points and it comes to 20 so you can open. This means you can open with the following hand types:

Points	Two longest suits
11	4+5, 6+3
10	5+5, 6+4

Sometimes a hand fulfills the rule of twenty but isn't suitable for an opening bid. For example:

♠ K 8

♥ A

♦ Q J 8 4

♣ 9 8 6 5 4 2

If you open 1♣ and partner bids either 1♥ or 1♠ your only second bid is 2♣ - not a good contract. If you defend partner is likely to lead a club and be disappointed. So the second part of the rule of twenty is that your points should be in your long suits. Change that hand slightly and it is fine to open 1♣:

♠ 8 2

♥ 4

♦ Q J 8 4

♣ A K 9 8 6 5

A final consideration when evaluating your hand is whether you have a second bid when partner responds. For this hand your second bid would be a sound 2♣.

One final point: you have intentionally opened light because distribution makes up for the lack of points. You must continue bidding as though you have a 12-14 opening hand - don't pass at your first opportunity!