

INTRODUCTION TO HAND EVALUATION

4321 Point Count

- Reasonably good method for evaluating balanced hands, i.e. hands that are going to play in notrump
- Non-balanced hands require serious adjustments - the 4321 method of hand evaluation is insufficient for distributional hands
- Some 12-counts shouldn't be opened, some 10 counts should

Honors

- "Married" honors are more valuable than their 4321 point count indicates
- "Scattered" honors are less valuable than their 4321 point count indicates
- Body cards (tens and nines) have value, particularly in long suits and for notrump contracts

Distribution

- Points in long suits are worth more
- Points in short suits are worth less
- Body cards in long and trump suits matter
- Voids and singletons add value to hands that will play in a suit contract

Adjustments

Upgrades

- Length - Good, long suits will take more tricks than their HCPs indicate (2s and 3s can become tricks!). The longer the suit, the more valuable it will be.
- Married honors - AK, KQ combinations in length suits
- Body Cards
- Aces - Generally worth more than four points
- Extra Trump Length – add one point for every card over the expected length. For example, if you are supporting partner's opening major suit bid and have four cards in the suit rather than the expected three, add one point.
- Extra Distribution

Note: Shortness in a side suit looks valuable at first glance. Don't give it any value until you and partner have found a fit.

Downgrades

- Honors in short suits
- "Scattered" honors
- 4-3-3-3 distribution
- Jacks not in combination with other honors or a long suit
- Lack of quick tricks in suit-oriented hands