

OPENING ONE OF A SUIT – IMPROVE YOUR JUDGEMENT

Summary Opening in 1st and 2nd seat
Improving Level



Opening at the one level in 1st and 2nd seat 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.

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

Counting 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*.