

Bridge Tips - "Pearls"

1. When responding to partner's opening 1NT, never use Stayman (Looking for a 4-card Major fit) when holding a 4-3-3-3 or 3-4-3-3 distribution. There is little trumping capacity in a hand with such distribution, and this holding will oft times produce 3NT, but only 3 Hearts or 3 Spades, not 4, and if 4H or 4S, than 4NT as well for a maximum score.
2. When responding to partner's opening 1NT, also do not employ the Stayman convention when you, as Responder, realize that the cumulative HCP values held by the partnership are 29-32. Even if an 8-card "Golden Fit" is found, such holdings will produce the same number of tricks in No Trump as in the Major-suit fit, and the extra 10 points scored in No Trump can be the winning competitive score. If the partnership holds 26-28 HCP's then seeking a 4H or 4S contract is viable.
3. When leading from KQ10X or KQ10XX against a No Trump contract, the proper lead is the "Q" (not the "K") asking partner to drop either the "J" or the "A". This gives the leader justification to continue play of the suit at trick #2. Absent Partner playing the Jack or the Ace, Opening Leader will abandon play of the suit until Partner or Declarer plays the suit.
4. Defenders must develop a signaling technique for their discards. When partner leads a suit you must give attitude (a high card signals encouragement for a continuance of partner's led suit, and a low card signals discouragement for continuance). When Declarer leads a suit, defenders must give count. (A high-low signal evidences an *even number* of cards (2, 4, or 6) in Declarer's led suit, and a low-high signal evidences an *odd number* of cards (1, 3, or 5).
5. "4NT" is always the Blackwood Convention; i.e., asking for partner to evidence the number of Aces held in order to explore for slam, with one exception. "1NT" – "4NT" is *not* Blackwood, but rather quantitative, asking opener to pass with 15 HCP's (12 HCP's in the "Acol System") and to go to "6NT" with 16 or 17 HCP's (13-14 HCP's in the "Acol System"). Similarly, "1NT" – "5NT" is also quantitative, asking opener to go to "6NT" with 15 HCP's (12 HCP's in the "Acol System"), and to "7NT" with 16 or 17 HCP's (13-14 HCP's in the "Acol System").
6. The Rule of 11: - In a No Trump Contract, if the opening lead is assumed to be the fourth-highest, deduct the numerical number of the card led from the number 11. The answer to this computation is the number of cards in the three remaining hands, yours, Dummy's and the second opponent's, that can beat the card led. This rule can be utilized both by Declarer as well as the partner of the player who led in order to best play the cards held, so as not to waste high cards unnecessarily.
7. The Rule of 1: - When there is just 1 trump out higher than yours, it is normally best to leave it out. To eliminate their top trump costs you two trumps and gives up the initiative, neither of which you can necessarily afford.
8. To calculate how the outstanding cards in any suit be statistically distributed between the opponents, if the number of outstanding cards be even, they are split oddly; if odd, they are split evenly. Examples: If you and partner have 8 cards in any suit and the number of outstanding cards be 5 (an odd number), statistically, most often they are split evenly; i.e. 3-2; if the number of outstanding cards be 4 (an even number), most often they are split unevenly; i.e., 3-1.
9. The Rule of 15: When considering opening the bidding in fourth position after three previous consecutive passes, statistically speaking, more often than not, you will end the hand with a plus score for your team if you can count 15 or more (HCP's, plus one point for each actual Spade you hold, regardless whether it be an honor or not); and a negative score for your team if the summation of the above two calculations be less than 15. If the Rule is not satisfied (15 or more) pass out the hand and do not open the bidding.
10. So as to, most easily, avoid confusion, make a partnership agreement that a "4C" bid is always Gerber, asking for Aces, only after a beginning or ending NT bid during any auction, and that at any other time, it be construed as natural.