

Bridge News

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Bergen Total Points – The True Value of a Bridge Hand

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In the July 2008 issue of the Newsletter I proposed a revised system for counting out the hand and asked members for their systems and suggestions; I received no responses. However, Marty Bergen recently addressed counting out the hand in the October 2008 issues of the "Bridge Bulletin" (Page 50) and in more detail in his 2008 book on "Slam Bidding"; devoting almost 100 pages to the process of counting out the hand. I really like his novel approach. Here it is.

OVERVIEW

He starts by defining "Starting Points" for both declarer and partner, and next considers "Dummy Points" when a fit is established. And, finally re-evaluates the declarer's points, after a fit is found, which he terms "Bergen Points". If in the final evaluation one has a total of 33 points (NOT JUST HIGH CARD VALUES), a slam is possible. I will

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Club Bridge Notes

Bridge Tip #1

Rule - With a combined holding of 10 cards in a suit missing the King, the finesse offers a much better chance than playing for the drop.

In 100 cases:

Finesse is right 37 times

Drop is right 13 times

Irrelevant 50 times

Thus the finesse is a 2.85/1 favorite. Rule: 10 ever, 11 never.

Bridge Tip #2

In his Complete Book on Takeout Doubles Mike Lawrence describes the takeout double as "the most useful, the most used, and the most misunderstood of all conventions". A double with 12 to 16+ HCP over an opening bid of one of a suit should ideally have at least 3-card support for the other three suits. Slight deviations in shape are allowed, but if you follow these rules, you will avoid making bad doubles.

Rule - Don't double with only two cards in an unbid major.

With: ♠-Jx ♥-Kxxx ♦-Kxx ♣-AQxx

Don't double over any opening except 1♠.

Rule - Don't double with a singleton in an unbid suit.

With: ♠-Axxx ♥-KJxx ♦-KQxx ♣-x

Don't double over any opening except 1♣.

Rule - Don't double when holding a 5-card major.

With: ♠-AJxxx ♥-KQxx ♦-x ♣-Kxx

Bid 1♠ over an opening of 1♦. The problem with doubling is that you will never be able to show your 5-card spade suit. Doubling and then bidding spades shows a much better hand and suit.

Lawrence's book is a must read!

now review the Bergen Process of counting out the Bridge hand.

(A) STARTER POINTS

STEP ONE which he call "Adjust-3"

The adjust-3 three processes are employed by both partners.

(1) Add up your HCP in the traditional way: Ace=4HCP, King = 3, Q =2 and J=1.

(2) Count your underrated honors: # of aces + # of tens

(3) Count your overrated honors: # of jacks and queens (KINGS are excluded)

(4) Subtract the smaller from the larger

(5) Consider the difference: If the value is 0-2, no adjustment is required. If the value is 3-5 adjust the HCP count total by 1. If the value is 6+ (rare), adjust by 2

(6) If you have more underrated honors your adjustment is positive add 0, 1 or 2 points. If the overrated honors are more, you adjust by subtracting the difference (0, 1, or 2).

STEP TWO (adjust for dubious doubletons and singletons, quality suits, and length)

Having adjusted for your overrated and underrated honors, you next

- (1) Subtract one point for dubious card combinations: KQ, KJ, QJ, Qx, Jx, K, Q, and J.
- (2) Add one point for a suit with 4+ cards and 3+ of the top 5 honors (AKQJ10).
- (3) Add one point for long suits: 1 for 5-cards, 2 for 6-cards, 3 for 7-cards, etc.

At the conclusion of steps ONE and TWO, declarer and partner have established what Bergen terms "Starting Points", note that neither partner has yet considered worthless doubletons, singletons' or voids.

Let's consider a few examples.

(1) ♠AQ2 ♥AQ105 ♦K1097 ♣A7

19 traditional HCP with 5 upgrades (3 aces, 2 tens) and two downgrades (2 queens). $5-2=3$, so add 1 point; the adjust-3 total is 20. With no dubious honors in short suits, no 4+ cards with 3+ honors, and no long suits (5+cards); the number of starting points is 20.

(2) ♠KQJ ♥KQ75 ♦AJ76 ♣KJ

20 traditional HCP with 1 upgrade (ace) and 5 downgrades (quacks), $5-1=4$, subtract 1 point. The Adjust-3 total is 19 HCP. Because of the dubious doubleton (♠KQ), subtract 1 point so that the total starting points is 18 HCP (20-1-1). Therefore, open 1♦. This hand is not worth a 2NT opening playing 2/1.

(3) ♠QJ65 ♥K ♦J752 ♣AJ73

12 traditional HCP with 1 upgrade (ace), and 4 downgrades (quacks), $4-1=3$, subtract 1 point. Dubious singleton (♥K), subtract 1 point; so the total starting points is 10 HCP (12-1-1). So pass.

(4) ♠AJ1096 ♥3 ♦A1096 ♣A92

13 traditional HCP with 5 upgrades (3 aces + 2 tens), and 1 downgrade (jack), $5-1=4$ add 1 point. Add 1 point for quality suit. Add 1 point for 5-card suit. Total starting points is $13+1+1+1 = 16$ starting points. Open 1♠ and show values with rebid.

(5) ♠74 ♥AK108 ♦AK10943 ♣6

14 traditional HCP with 4 upgrades (2 aces + 2 tens), and no downgrades, $4-0=4$ add 1 point. Add 2 (two quality suits) + 2 (6-card suit). Total starting points is $14 + 1 + 2 + 2 = 19$. Open 1♦ playing 2/1 and if partner bids 1♠ you would reverse by bidding 2♥. If you play precision, open one club.

(B) DUMMY (short) POINTS with a fit

When you raise partner's suit and that suit become trumps, you will be dummy. If you have a short suit or two, here is the correct way to add points.

Doubleton = 1 point for each.

Singleton = 2 points, but 3 points with 4+ trumps.

Void = # of trumps in dummy's hand. Bergen says, dummy should not count 5 points for a void unless he has 5 trumps (this is different if you have read "2/1 in a Nutshell" by Dee Berry p. 10, Support Points).

With four trumps you evaluate: 4, 3, and 1 (void, singleton, and doubleton, respectively).

With only three trumps you evaluate: 3, 2, and 1, respectively.

When responding to partner, "dummy" adds his dummy points to his starting points.

Examples: The bidding goes 1♣ -1♥- ??? You hold ♠KQ ♥AQ64 ♦QJ4 ♣KQ76

19HCP

Adjust-3 Subtract 1 (1 upgrade and 5 downgrades)

Dubious doubleton -- subtract 1

17 starting points

Short suits -- add one for doubleton

Total 18 dummy points

Bid 3♥, not four with a much downgraded hand.

You hold ♠2 ♥A1062 ♦973 ♣AKJ98

12HCP No Adjust-3

Quality club suit -- add one.

Length points (5 clubs) -- add one.

14 starting points

Short suits -- add 3 points (singleton with 4 trumps)

Total 17 dummy points

Bid 3♥, not two.

(C) BERGEN POINTS --- when partner raises your suit

When partner raises your suit, you have to consider short suits, extra length in trumps and side suits. Hence, you must again re-evaluate your starting points.

Short suits:

2 points for a singleton

4 point for a void

Add an extra 1 point for 2 or 3 doubletons

Extra Length in Trumps:

With 6+ trumps, add an additional 1 point for each trump after five

1 point for 6-card suit

2 points 7-card suit

Side Suits

Add by an additional point for a 4-card or a 5-card "side" suit

Examples: The bidding goes 1♥ -3♥ (limit raise) you hold ♠A10 ♥AK7654 ♦3 ♣AJ109

16HCP

Adjust-3 total: add 1 (5 upgrades and 1 downgrade)

Quality Club suit -- add 1

Length points – add 1 (6-card suit)

20 starting points

Short suits -- add two singletons

6+trumps --- add 1

Side suit Add 1 (club suit)

Total 24 Bergen Points

With partner's limit raise of 10-12 dummy points, you have at least 34 points. You know you have enough aces and key cards, bid 6♥.

You hold ♠KQ ♥AKJ64 ♦K763 ♣QJ

19HCP

Adjust-3 total: subtract 1 point (1 upgrade, 4 downgrades)

Subtract 2 for dubious doubletons

Length points – add 1 (5-card suit)

17 starting points

Short suits – add 1 point (2 doubletons)

Side suits - add 1 (4-card diamond suit)

Total 19 Bergen Points (17+1+1=19)

You should sign off in 4♥ --- you do not have enough points to investigate slam.

Complete Example of the Hand Counting Process proposed by Marty Bergen from his new 2008 book on "Slam Bidding" published by Bergen Books (page 92).

As **Opener** you hold the following hand: ♠J1043 ♥AQ7 ♦AK962 ♣4.

And your **Partner** holds the hand: ♠KQ75 ♥K9542 ♦5 ♣A2.

Without Bergen's method, Opener has 14HCP and responder has 12HCP.

However, using the Adjust-3 process:

Opener's starting points are 14HCP + 1 (5diamonds) + 15 Starting Points

Responder's starting points are 12HCP + 2 (two 5-card suits) = 14 Starting Points

Auction

Opener bids 1♦ partner, partner has 14 starting points, with no fit in diamonds so he cannot add additional points for the doubleton or the singleton and hence responds 1♠.

However, the opener with a spade fit must add 3 points for his singleton (4♣). With 18 dummy points, he jumps to 3♠. After being raised, responder added 2 points for his singleton (5♦), and adds an additional point for his 5-card heart suit. That brings him to 17 Bergen Points.

Now 3♠ showed 17-19 dummy points, so responder knows that the total that his side has is 34+ total points. With controls in all the suits, he bid 4NT (Blackwood). The 5♥ bid (2aces) confirms that one ace is missing, so responder bids 6♠. He draws the trumps and scores up a slam. Would your partnership have bid the slam using your “hand counting” method?

Cue Bidding for Slam --- Example from Bergen’s Book with Bergen’s Advice and Bidding Tools

Most bridge players use control cue-bids for the investigation of slam (as discussed in the February 2009 issue of the Newsletter). However, some believe that it should only be used to “show aces” or a “void” --- first round control. THIS IS NOT MARTY BERGEN’S POSITION. He states that **control-cue bids promise a control in that suit – whether first-round or second round (called Italian Cue Bids)**. If a player bypasses a suit, a control in that suit is denied.

South Dealer - How do you bid this hand?

North	South
♠ KQ7654	♠ A1063
♥ AQ3	♥ 9
♦ K2	♦ AJ964
♣ 98	♣ KQ2

The bidding goes:

North	South
	1♦
1♠	3♠
4♦	4♥
4NT	5♥
6♠	

North’s Bergen Points

14HCP +2(6-card suit) = 16 Starting Points

16 + 1 (doubleton) +1 (6trumps) = 18 Bergen Points

South’s Dummy Points

14HCP = 16 Starting Points

14HCP +3 (singleton with 4 trumps) = 18 Dummy Points

North’s 4♦ bid denies a control in clubs – the suit bypassed. So if South does not have a club control, he would sign off in 4♣. Because South did not sign off, he has to have a control. The 4♥ bid shows first or second round control in hearts. West now bids 4NT to reach the lay down slam.

Note: with two worthless doubletons, North should not bid 4NT since the slam depends on location, location, and location of honors!

West Dealer - How do you bid this hand?

West	East
♠ KJ87642	♠ A1053
♥ A	♥ KQ73
♦ 64	♦ J102
♣ AKQ	♣ 85

The bidding goes:

West	East
1♠	3♠
4♣	4♥
4♠	Pass