

## KATE'S RULES TO LIVE BY

*You've probably heard some, if not most, of these before. But, depending upon your level and your experience, perhaps some may be new to you. I hope you'll give them a try. They work!*

1. **BID MORE ON THE FIRST ROUND.** Whenever possible, "Get it out of your system on the first round of bidding" while it's still safe to do so.
2. **GET IN AND GET OUT EARLY.** If you don't find a fit, get out of the bidding.
3. **MAKE THE OPPONENTS MAKE THE LAST GUESS - NOT YOU.** On highly competitive deals, bid as high as you are willing to go immediately, then get out and watch them deal with the problem.
4. **GIVE THE OPPONENTS A PROBLEM WHENEVER YOU CAN DO SO WITH RELATIVE SAFETY.** If they have no problems, they will play well. If they have problems to cope with, then, no matter how good they are, they won't be able to solve them all.
5. **DON'T SELL OUT AT THE 2-LEVEL WHEN THE OPPONENTS HAVE AN 8-CARD FIT.** However, if you think that either side may have no 8-card fit it is correct to sell out at the two-level.
6. **DON'T PLAY TO TRICK ONE UNTIL YOU HAVE A PLAN.** Applies both to defenders and to declarer. If you don't know what you're playing for, don't play!
7. **NEVER MAKE A PENALTY DOUBLE OF A PART-SCORE WITHOUT FOUR TRUMPS.** (That means never!)
8. **LIMIT YOUR HAND WHENEVER YOU CAN.** Partner knows the partnership level, and the bidding goes smoothly from here.
9. **NEVER LIE ABOUT TRUMP LENGTH.** If you do, partner cannot make winning LOTT decisions. Or, he will choose the wrong trump suit. Or, he will misdefend because he has the wrong count.
10. **WHEN YOU HAVE A RAISE, RAISE.** Whenever you can, raise your partner's suits.

11. **WHEN YOU KNOW WHAT'S TRUMP, TELL PARTNER.** He makes better decisions when he knows.
12. **WHEN YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO - DO IT.** Don't make partner guess.
13. **BID YOUR LONG SUITS - DON'T MAKE A TAKEOUT DOUBLE.**
14. **BID YOUR FIVE-CARD MAJORS - DON'T MAKE A TAKEOUT DOUBLE.**
15. **IF YOU KNOW THAT YOU DON'T WANT YOUR DOUBLE TO END THE AUCTION - DON'T DOUBLE.** Find another bid. Perhaps 1NT or 2NT takeout (or 4NT), or a flexible cue-bid or a natural bid.
16. **DON'T BALANCE!** There are exceptions, of course - e.g., when they have found a fit and are passed out at the two-level. But, as a general rule, balancing is losing bridge. Bid your hand on the first round, before they know what to do.
17. **LONG SUITS FIRST!** With a 6/5, open or respond in the six-card suit. Similarly, with 4/5 in the minors, try to open 1C if you can - open 1D only when you must.
18. **WITH WEAKNESS, DON'T PLAY IN NOTRUMP - FIND A TRUMP FIT.** When we have around half the high cards (or less), no spots, and no source of tricks, we'll usually take more tricks in a trump suit, even when both hands are balanced. Therefore: Don't pass 1NT openings with bad hands, unless you must.
19. **FOUR-OF-A-PREVIOUSLY BID MAJOR IS ALWAYS TO PLAY.** Not a Q-bid - NEVER.
20. **IF YOU HAVE A CHOICE OF BIDS AND ONE OF THEM IS 3NT - BID 3NT.**
21. **PLAY WITHIN YOUR PARTNERSHIP.** Always have what *this* partner expects you to have, no matter what else you may think is right. Change your system later, not at the table.
22. **PARTNER NEVER HAS THE RIGHT HAND.** Be practical - don't look for the miracle unless you can do so safely.
23. **ALWAYS BELIEVE YOUR PARTNER.** He's on *your* side. Trust the information he gives you. Always assume that he knows what he's doing, even when it looks as if he's lost his mind.

24. **WITH A 6-CARD SUIT, BID TO THE 2-LEVEL BY YOURSELF. WITH A 7-CARD SUIT, BID TO THE 3-LEVEL BY YOURSELF.** (No exceptions)
25. **WE HAVE NO PENALTY DOUBLE OF THEIR BID-AND-RAISED SUIT AT THE TWO-LEVEL.** This includes their support-double sequences.
26. **WHEN YOU'RE ABOUT TO BECOME DECLARER WITH FOUR-SMALL TRUMPS, UNDERBID.**
27. **WHENEVER A NATURAL AND LIMITING NOTRUMP CALL IS ONE OF YOUR OPTIONS, THAT'S THE RIGHT BID.** If 1NT is one of your options, bid 1NT.
28. **WHEN THERE IS NO FIT, UNDERBID.**
29. **SURPRISE 6-5 - DON'T PLAY 3NT.**
30. **DON'T PLAY NOTRUMP WITH SINGLETONS AND VOIDS.** Similarly, don't defend notrump with singletons and voids. If you have an option, take it. Don't pass partner's 1NT opening or rebid with a singleton. Don't pass their 1NT opening with a singleton if you can scrape up a bid.
31. **TAKEOUT DOUBLES ARE NEVER OFFSHAPE.** (Okay, almost never) Allowable exceptions are a) equal-level conversion of clubs to diamonds; b) strong notrumps c) 4-4 majors. **NO OTHER EXCEPTIONS.** We don't start with double to show extra high-cards.
32. **DON'T PASS A GOOD HAND WITHOUT A PLAN.** And be sure the plan is a good one. Under most conditions - get your message across immediately before you are left without room to make a cooperative decision.
33. **DON'T OVERBID YOUR OWN GOOD HANDS.** When the deal belongs to your side this is not the time to be pushy. In the long run you will lose heavily. If you want to overbid, do so when the hand belongs to the opponents, where you have something to gain.
34. **ON FREAK DEALS, DON'T DEFEND.**
35. **AVOID DOUBLE-GAME SWINGS.** Take out insurance.
36. **CONSTRUCT THREE HANDS.** When you have a difficult bidding decision, construct three hands for partner which are

consistent with his bidding - a good hand, an average hand, and a bad hand. Then go with two-out-of-three. (No, Zia didn't invent this one even though Michael Rosenberg gave him credit. Marty Bergen was the originator of the idea - he calls it "plastic.")

37. **CHOICE OF GAMES COMES BEFORE SLAM BIDDING.** When we don't have a trump suit, all ambiguous bids below game should be interpreted as an attempt to get to the right game, not as Q-bids showing slam interest.
38. **NO Q-BIDS BELOW 3NT - 3-LEVEL BIDS SHOW VALUES, NOT ACES.** As above, Choice-of-games comes before slam bidding.
39. **IF PARTNER MAKES A SLAM TRY AND YOU HAVE AK OF TRUMPS - BID IT.**
40. **NEVER MAKE A GRAND TRY WITH AKQ OF TRUMPS - PARTNER WON'T BID IT.**
41. **IF YOU MAY BE HAVING A MISUNDERSTANDING, DON'T BID A GRAND.**
42. **IF YOU'RE NOT CERTAIN, DON'T BID SEVEN.**
43. **THINK FOR YOURSELF - DON'T BE A PARROT OR A PUPPET.** You can't win by following rules. But, this does not mean that you are free to step outside your partnership. It's a balancing act. Make your partnership rules and follow them, but remember to use your own brain.
44. **PARTNER IS YOUR BEST FRIEND.** You can't win without him. Treat him well - he doesn't play well if you don't.
45. **KEEP AN OPEN MIND.** Even the high and mighty may learn something from the most humble.
46. **IT'S ONLY A CARD GAME - IT'S NOT LIFE!**

*And a few more for less experienced players to help you learn to bid better.*

1. POINTS DON'T TAKE TRICKS. The high-card points are only a very rough guideline, and are not nearly so important as other factors. Forget the points and look at the fit. Look at long suits, good suits, trick-taking potential, hand quality, position, etc
2. LISTEN TO YOUR PARTNER - he is giving you information. If you are listening you will find that he is often telling you what to do.
3. BID IN CONTEXT. Always think about what is already known (about your hand, and partner's, and the opponents) before you make a call.
4. CONSTRUCT THE HANDS DURING THE BIDDING. Never make a decision without picturing the other hands - especially partner's hand. And make sure the hand you give him is one which is consistent with his bidding.
5. MAKE FLEXIBLE BIDS RATHER THAN UNILATERAL DECISIONS. If you're not sure what to do, keep your options open.
6. DON'T MAKE DECISIONS WHICH AREN'T YOURS TO MAKE. (Involve your partner when you need him.)
7. OVERBID WITH A GOOD FIT. Total tricks will play high.
8. UNDERBID WITH NO FIT. Total tricks will play low.
9. OVERBID WITH GOOD DISTRIBUTION.
10. UNDERBID FLAT HANDS. 4x3 is the worst. But don't overdo it. If partner has a lot of shape, your 4x3 is quite likely to be a good hand for him.
11. DON'T BLOW A WINNING POSITION. When you've made them guess at a high level, don't bail them out by bidding one more or making a silly double.
12. NO Q-BIDS UNTIL YOU KNOW WHAT'S TRUMP. Until there is a trump suit established, all bids should be treated as a suggestion of a place to play.