

**Bridge Lesson
Useful Bridge Rules
for
Decision Making**

The Villages Duplicate Bridge Club

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Overview

Playing the 2/1 Game Force System, Precision, Standard American or the “Yellow Card”, bridge players and bridge experts have developed many rules and laws for guiding their decision making.

In this lesson, we will review many of them with examples to help you make better decisions when playing the game.

The rules/laws are suggested to help your judgment.

However, the New ACBL Convention Charts that go into effect November 22, 2018 use many of them to evaluate “Hand Strength”.

I plan on reviewing several rules/laws with examples to improve your judgment. One could have a lesson on each rule.

I hope that this introduction will help with your further study of the game.

You may take notes, but the slides will be posted on the Education Tab on our Web site. Listen and ask questions.

Rules Reviewed

- Losing Trick Count (LTC) – Defined
- Rule of 24 (Hand Evaluation/Hand Strength)
- Rule of 8 and 2 verses Strong 15-17 Notrump
- Rule of 13 and 2 verses Strong 20-21/22 Notrump
- Rule for Weak 10-12 or 12-14 Notrump
- Rule of 9/N (Take-out X/Hand Strength)
- Rule of 10 (Penalty X)
- Rule of 2/3 (Level of Weak Preempt Bids)
- Rule of 17 (Weak Preempts/Hand Strength)
- Law of Total Tricks
- Short Suit Total (SST) Rule
- Rule of 44 (Open 2♣)
- Rule of 64 (Shape rebids)
- Rule of 210 (Bid to the 5-level?)
- Rule of 88 (with Stayman)
- Rule of 11/10/12 – Leads
- 8 ever 9 Never (Finesse Q?)
- 10 ever 11 Never (Finesse K?)
- Rule of 22 (Bidding)
- Rule of 20/19 (Bids/Hand Strength)
- Rule of 15 (4th Seat Openings)
- Rule of 7 (Hold Up & Points)
- Barry Crane's Commandments

Losing Trick Count (LTC)

- Assume you are playing in a suit contract where you have an agreed upon trump suit (usually an 8-card fit). How do you count your losers?
- (1) You count losers only for the **first three cards** in a suit. Why?
- Because you assume that excess cards are winners with “normal” breaks in the trump suit and that excess cards in other suits can be ruffed.
- (2) In a 3-card suit **A-K-Q are winners** and anything lower is a loser.
- (3) For a doubleton, A/K are winners; and, anything lower is a loser.
Exception A-Q=1/2 loser or 1 ½ winners.
- (4) For a singleton , count the Ace as a winner and anything lower as a loser.

Counting Losers

- xxx, Jxx = 3 losers
- Qxx, Qxxx = 2.5 losers (or simply=2)
- Axx, AJx, KJx, Kxx, = 2 losers.
- QJx, Q10x, Qxxx, QJ, Qx, Jx, xx = 2 losers
- AQx, AQx, AJ10, KQx, KJ10, Q = 1
- AKx, AQJ, KQ, Kx, K, Q, J, x = 1 loser
- AQ = 0.5 losers
- AK, AKQ,void = 0 losers
- You do not count more than 3 losers per suit. For example, xxxxx is only 3 losers, not 5!

Examples of LTC Hands

Hand	Losers	Hand	Losers	Hand	Losers
♠ KJ52	= 2	♠ QJ63	= 2	♠ A98632	= 2
♥ AJ864	= 2	♥ AKQ2	= 0	♥ AQ986	= 1
♦ 82	= 2	♦ 97	= 2	♦ K2	= 1
♣ K8	<u>= 1</u>	♣ A32	<u>= 2</u>	♣ void	<u>= 0</u>
12 points	7	16 points	6	13points	4

As the points increase the losers usually decrease.
The more unbalanced the hand, the fewer the losers.

Very bad hand – 9 Losers (Less than 9 HCP).

Just Less than an Opening Hand - 8 Losers on average (9-11 HCP)

On average hands with 12-14 HCP = 7 losers (opening hand)

On average hands with 15-17 HCP = 6 losers (strong 1NT hands)

On average hands with 18-21 HCP = 5 losers (strong suit hands/2NT)

On average hands with 22+ HCP = 4 or less losers (2♣ hands playing 2/1)

Rule of 24 (LTC) – Step 1

- Losing trick count (LTC) is a method of evaluating your hand to determine the proper bidding level. The method is most effective **with unbalanced hands with an eight-card or better trump fit** when the two hands have different distributional patterns. The Rule of 24 goes:
- **STEP 1: Count your losers and assume seven losers in your partner's hand. Rule: $24 - 7 - (\text{your losers}) = \text{Number of Tricks}$.**
- **Reduce the number of tricks by six to determine the level of the bid. (e.g. $24 - 7 - 7 (\text{your losers}) = 10$ tricks).**
- **To determine your bidding level subtract 6 = "your book" ($10 - 6 = 4 = \text{bidding LEVEL}$).**

Rule of 24 – Step2

- STEP 2: Partner will correct the bid with fewer than seven losers.

Recall: Only the first three cards in each suit are considered when counting losers in each suit. With three cards, only the A, K, and Q are not losers. With less than two cards, then $AQ=1/2$, $Kx=1/2$, $KQ=1$, $K=1$, $Q=1$, $Qx=2$ represent losers.

The Rule of 24 works best if suits break “normally” and half your finesses work!

It does not apply to notrump contracts.

When does it Work?

The LTC method is only valid if your trump fit (4-4, 5-3 or better) and even then care is required to avoid counting double values in the same suit e.g. KQxx (1 loser in LTC) opposite a singleton x (also 1 loser in LTC).

Regardless of which hand evaluation method you use (HCP, LTC, Marty Bergen's Adjust 3 Method, or Zar Points, etc.) partners must exchange information about specific suit strengths and suit lengths.

What does this mean?

You must also have a **game try agreement** in place to avoid overlapping values in suits (e.g. HSGT, SSGT, LSGT, 2NTGT, Point count GT, etc.)

Without this exchange of bidding information, any evaluation methods will fail. Yes, even the "Law of Total Tricks".

LTC with a Fit

- LTC hand evaluation is a guide in the action.
- If partner opens and you have an 8-loser hand with a fit , you should invite game! Why?
- $24 - 7(\text{partner}) - 8(\text{you}) = 9$ tricks so invite!
- Partner will bid game with a 6-loser hand.

LTC Example

West	East	West	East
♠ KQ654	♠ A83	1♠	2♠
♥ K2	♥ 654	2NT(SSGT)	3♦(shortness)
♦ 863	♦ 9	4♠	
♣ A97	♣ K85432		

East has spade support and West opened the bidding. West counts his losers 7 and estimates 8 for partner (simple raise) $24-7-8=9$ tricks. After a SSGT bid, he reduces his LTC number by ONE, so $6+8=14$ or $24-14=10$ tricks and bids game.

LTC is a hand evaluation aid for suit contracts. Note that HSGT does not work here!

ACBL Rule of 24

- The New ACBL convention charts which goes into effect November 22, 2018 says that a “**Strong**” hand is one with at least 14 HCP or meets the Rule of 24.
- Or a hand with 15HCP
- Or a hand with 5 control points (A=2 and King=1) and is within one trick of game assuming suits break evenly among other hands.

Interference over 1NT (15-17)

When the opponents open a strong notrump, Mel Colchamiro's Rules of 8 and 2, based on average expected tricks are often used.

Rule of 8 says you need a minimum of 6 HCP.

After adding the number of cards in your two longest suits and subtracting the number of losers using the losing trick count (LTC) method, the number must be 2 or more to compete/interfere over the strong 15-17 NT bid. Note that $6+2=8$; hence, the rule.

Rule of 2, used in the **balancing**, says if you have at least two shortness points, independent of HCP – then compete/interfere over notrump.

Do not bid with flat hands: 4-4-3-2, 5-3-3-2, and 4-3-3-3 shapes are defensive shapes. Don't overcall on those shape regardless of strength.

Example

The opponents open 1NT (15-17) and you hold

♠ 107
♥ KQJ1083
♦ 1093
♣ 86

Do you compete/interfere or pass in the direct seat?

What about the balancing seat?

What did you do?

Looks like a good hand with 6HCP and a six card suit.

However, the two longest suits(9) – LTC(9)= 0<2

So you must NOT compete in the direct seat.

However, in the balancing seat you have 2 shortness points, so you must interfere using your agreed upon convention.

Example

The opponents open 1NT (15-17) and you hold

♠ AK
♥ K J 10 9 8 7
♦ 10 9 3
♣ K 6

Do you compete/interfere or pass in the direct seat?

What about the balancing seat?

What did you do?

Looks like a very good hand with $14\text{HCP} > 11$

The two longest suits $(9) - \text{LTC}(6) = 9 - 6 = 3 > 2$

So you must interfere/compete, but using what convention?

Playing DON'T you would X^* (5/6+ unknown suit), playing Cappelletti you would bid $2\clubsuit^*$ (unknown long 6+ card suit), playing Meckwell you would bid $2\heartsuit$, and playing Modified Blooman/Weber you would bid $2\diamondsuit^*$ as a transfer bid. Where $^* = \text{alert}$.

A clear advantage of the transfer bids are that they put the strong hand on lead.

In the balancing seat you have 2 shortness points, so you must also interfere using your agreed upon convention.

I will review these conventions and others in my future Lesson "Interfering Over Weak and Strong Notrumps".

When do you bid over 2NT?

On the Convention Card it says:

DEFENSE VS NOTRUMP

- So, the same “disturbing over notrump conventions” that you play over 1NT apply to 2NT bids!
- But 2NT=20-21 not 15-17 so add 5HCP.
- Now you need at least **11 HCP** or Rule of 13!
- Adding your two longest – LTC= 2 to compete/interfere over 2NT opening bids!

Weak Notrumps

The weak notrump range is 12-14 and the “Kamikaze” mini range is 10-12.

These ranges are most commonly employed by strong club pairs (e.g. the Precision Club).

Note: 12-15 opening notrump bids are considered STRONG not weak.

When the announced range includes the number 15, the ACBL considers it a strong NT. Adjust your CC if necessary.

The opponents are often misguided because they think weakness by the opponent's make their hands “strong”.

Over strong notrump you want to be destructive and interfere, but over weak NT you want to be constructive and interfere.

You are:

- 1) More likely to locate a fit and make a part score.
- 2) Double the opponents for Penalty.
- 3) Bid game when find a fit.

Problems You Must Consider

Playing and bidding against a Weak/Mini No Trump is **Much Harder** than against a Strong Notrump.

In general there is a lack of experience playing/bidding against weak notrump bids and understanding how it works.

You can't give up the penalty double because it will come up more often, and you can't give up on game try's, because you can't let weak notrump pairs steal your game. However, you are immediately forced to the 2-level.

Your opponents will have a run-out system to escape when you make a penalty double.

And do you play systems On/Off over a Weak/Mini notrump? Do you really care who plays the hand?

Judgment

The most used “Interference conventions over weak/strong notrump ” by players in the United States are Natural bids, Landy, Cappelletti, and Meckwell.

Yes, often the same as you may use against strong NT – Why change?

MOST DO NOT PLAY DONT SINCE the double (X) is not for PENALTY!

Others conventions played in the U.S. are Multi-Landy, Woolsey, Mohan, and Hello.

To compete against the weak/mini Notrump, you should have 10-14 HCP in the direct seat (adjusting for dubious doubletons) and double for penalty with 15+ HCP.

In the balancing seat, you may use the Rule of 2 to compete.

Do not compete/interfere with flat hands: 4-4-3-2, 5-3-3-2, and 4-3-3-3 shapes are defensive shapes. Don't overcall on those shape regardless of strength.

Examples

The opponents open a weak 1NT (12-14/10-12) and you hold

!1) ♠ KJ52 (2) ♠ AQ863
♥ AJ864 ♥ 764
♦ 82 ♦ 972
♣ K8 ♣ A10

Do you compete/interfere or pass in the Direct seat?

First Hand: you have 13HCP (subtract 1 for honor doubleton)= 12pts

Second Hand: you have 11HCP.

Both hands appear to have the required 10-14 HCP to compete/interfere.

However, look at your hand patterns. In the first it is 4-5-2-2 and the second 5-3-3-2.

In the first hand you want to compete, but in the second it is better to defend.

Many would want to bid because they do not understand weak NT bids.

What about the balancing seat? Same principles – even with 2 shortness points!

Analysis

- South has 2 aces and 2 Quick tricks with a 5-card spade suit and 10HCP!
- So South bids 2♠ and West bids 3♣ and North bids 3♠. All pass.
- East leads a diamond and west plays his Q♦ and shifts to the K♣, driving out the A♣. Declarer crosses to dummy with a heart and loses a spade, two diamonds, a diamond ruff, and a club for down 2.
- What happened?
- South made a bad overcall thinking he had a strong hand, he should pass and allow North to decide what to do!

Basic Principle when competing against Weak NT

- In strong (15-17)NT contracts the direct seat is most important; however, this is not the case against a weak NT pair.
- Instead, the balancing seat is more important when competing against weak NT pairs.
- Allow the opponents to show their hands.
- Better to wait!

Rule of 9/N

- A reopening double by opener is for takeout. Responder is expected to bid his best suit or pass for penalty with the correct hand.
- **What is the correct hand/decision?**
- The Rule of 9 (**called the RULE of N by the ACBL**) helps one decide whether to pass for penalty or to bid - to evaluate hand strength.
- To use the rule, you **add** the level of the contract (usually 2/3), to the number of the trump in your hand, to the number of trump honors (AKQJ10).
- **Formula: Level of Bid + # of trumps + # of trump honors = 9+**
- If this sum is **nine or more**, pass the takeout double for penalty.
- If the number is **eight or less**, bid something, do not let the double stand.

Example

The bidding goes:

North (partner)	East	South (You)	West
1♠	2♥	Pass	Pass
X	Pass	?	

And you as south hold

Hand 1

♠ 105
♥ AJ64
♦ 109764
♣ 87

or

Hand 2

♠ 75
♥ AQ1097
♦ Q72
♣ 352

Do you bid or pass? Your partner has made a takeout X.

What did you do?

- **Hand 1**
- You have 5 HCP and the level of their contract is two. Adding the contract length (2) + #of trumps(4) + # of trump honors(2) = $8 < 9$. So you must bid (e.g. **3♦**).

- **Hand 2**
- You have 8 HCP. Adding the level of their bid(2) + #of trumps(5) + # of trump honors(3) = $10 > 9$. So you must **NOT BID. Leave the X in for penalty.**

- If the opponents bid **3♥** you would leave the X in with both hands. Since by the RULE of 9 ---- the sum is 9 and 11, respectively. Increased by one for the 3-level bid.

Rule of 10

The rule of 9 is used to decide when to bid when partner makes a takeout X.

However, some may be tempted to also use it for penalty doubles when the opponents bid at the 2/3 or even the 4-level.

This as Mel Colchamiro says is incorrect – it is not the intent of the rule. Instead you may use my rule of 10! How does it work?

Penalty doubles occur most often when you or your partner are behind the declarer.

And, you and the opponents are usually without a fit.

Formula for the Rule of 10

If Partner has opened the bidding (assume 2 quick tricks)

Formula from LTC: $24 - 7 - (\text{your Losers}) + 2(\text{partners quick tricks}) - \text{Level of the Bid (contract)} = 10 +$ Then X for Penalty or pass partner's X.

If Partner has not opened the bidding, but overcalled or passed.

Then use these winning trick rules!

For a 2-level contract **penalty double**, you need 8 winning tricks ($13 - \text{losers} + \text{Level} = 8$) and 2 trump tricks $8 + 2 = 10$.

For a 3-level contract **penalty double**, you need 9 winning tricks ($13 - \text{losers} + \text{Level} = 9$) and only one trump trick ($9 + 1 = 10$).

At the 1 level you need 7 winning tricks + 3 trump tricks Or again "10" defined as ($13 - \text{losers} + 1 = 7 + 3$).

Problem 1 for the Rule of 10

- Your partner Opens and bids 1♠ and your opponent overcalls 2♣ - and you pass as do your opponents, but your partner X's.
- You hold: ♠A ♥K1043 ♦J1098 ♣K987
- Do you bid or pass the X?

Solution Problem 1 – LTC Formula

$$24 - 7 - 7(\text{losers}) + 2(\text{Quick}) - 2(\text{Level}) = 10$$

Leave the X in for penalty

Problem 2 for the Rule of 10

- Your partner opens 1♠ and your opponent overcalls 3♥, with 4 hearts you pass as does your opponent, but your partner X's.
- You hold: ♠A7 ♥KJ65 ♦10943 ♣K95
- Do you bid or pass the X?

Solution Problem 2 – LTC Formula

$$24 - 7 - 8(\text{Losers}) + 2(\text{Quick}) - 3(\text{level}) = 8 < 10$$

Bid 3♠

Problem 3 for Rule of 10

- You hold: ♠A987 ♥A5 ♦A109 ♣K987
- They bid 1♦, partner passed.
- What do you do if they bid not 2♦?
- What if they bid 3♦?
- You are to be the declarer and partner has passed.
- Do you pass or X for penalty?

Solution Problem 3 - Winning Trick Formula

$13 - 7(\text{Losers}) + 2(\text{level}) + 1 \text{ trump winner} = 9 < 10$ so pass

If the opponents bid $2\spadesuit$!

Now we have that $13 - 7(\text{losers}) + 3(\text{level}) + 1(\text{trump trick}) = 10$.

So you must X the $3\spadesuit$ bid for penalty sitting behind the declarer.

Preemptive Opening Bids

- A guide to preemptive opening bids and overcalls is that one cannot afford to be set more than 500 unless one is saving against a slam contract.
- One often assumes that a **vulnerable** partner can cover **two losers**, and a **non-vulnerable partner three**. Thus, a player who opens 4♠ should have an eight playing trick hand if vulnerable, and a seven playing trick hand if not vulnerable.
- What does this really mean?

The Rule of 2/3

- The Rule of 2/3 states that with a weak hand (up to 10HCP) and a long, strong suit, that you should count your playing tricks (**13-losers= playing tricks**) and add 3 when non-vulnerable, and add 2 if vulnerable to determine the level of your opening bid e.g. $13-7=6+3(NV)=9$ and $13-7+2(V)=8$ playing tricks.
- Or one may also use the Rule of 2-3-4 so that with **unequal vulnerability** you can be within 2 tricks of your bid (have 2 losers) with **equal vulnerability** 3 tricks of your bid and with **favorable vulnerability** 4 tricks of your bid!

Applying the 2/3-Rule

♠AKQ10653 ♥ 8 ♦ 854 ♣ 96 (non-vulnerable)

- You have 6 losers (0 in spades, 1 in hearts, 3 in diamonds and 2 in clubs). $13 - 6 \text{ losers} = 7$ playing tricks. Non-vulnerable, adding 3 = $7 + 3 = 10$ tricks so you should open, 4♠.
- If you open at only the three level, you would be underbidding your cards. You would open 3♠ only if vulnerable ($13 - 6 = 7 + 2 = 9$ tricks).
- It is obvious that the opponents are able to more easily bid over three spades than four spades.

Example of 2/3 Rule

♠ void ♥ 63 ♦ AQJ876432 ♣ 87

(non-vulnerable)

We have five losers or $13-5=8$ eight playing tricks. Adding three non-vulnerable takes us to 11 tricks. Therefore, one would open 5♦.

Rule of 17

- When your partner preempts with a weak major suit two bid (6-10HCP), you have to decide whether to compete to the three-level or bid game.
- Add your high card points to the number of trump held. If this total is 17 or more, bid game; if your HCP total is between 10-12 compete to the three-level and if your HCP is between 13-15 bid 2NT.
- After the bid of 2NT use OGUST; if the response is 3♥ (good hand, bad suit) or 3♠ (good hand, good suit), bid game, compete to the four-level, otherwise, raise the bid to the three-level.
- With 6-9 HCP and 2/3-card support, raise to the 2-level; otherwise pass or bid 1NT.

ACBL Rule of 17

- The New ACBL convention charts which go into effect in November 22, 2018 calls a hand with “**Near Average Strength**” a hand with 8 HCP or meets the Rule of 17.

Responding without OGUST

If you do not play OGUST, but use 2NT to ask for a feature, **OPENER MUST FORGET IT.**

Instead OPENER looks at HCP, are you closer to 6 or 10?

With 6 -7 rebid your weak suit at the 3-level.

With 8-10 bid a side suit with an A/K/Q. With no side suit but AKQ/AKJ in your weak suit, bid 3NT; otherwise pass 2NT.

Examples of weak 2 bids

- Partner opens 2♥ and you hold
 - ♠KJ9 ♥7 ♦KJ7654 ♣AQ7
 - HCP=14+1(trump)= 15 so bid 2NT.
-
- Partner opens 2♠ and you hold
 - ♠K8 ♥AK3 ♦K765 ♣A75
 - HCP=17 so bid game.

Responses to 2NT

- ♠KJ9 ♥7 ♦KJ7654 ♣AQ7
- Partner holds
- ♠6542 ♥KQJ1052 ♦A ♣56
- Over 2NT (OGUST) partner bids 3♠ (good hand – good suit)
- Without Ogust you have 10HCP so bid 3NT with no good side suit.
- Partner next bids 4♥.

What do you bid over weak 2/3 with a very strong hand?

- You have 20+ HCP, bid 4♣ which is called the weak 1430 RKCB convention.
- The responses are (01122)
- 4♦ = 0 4♥ = 1 wo Q 4♠ = 1 w Q 4NT = 2 wo Q
- And 5♣ = 2 w Q.

- A great convention you should add to your list!

Law of Total Tricks

(1) Sum of trumps bid by you and your opponents --- usually 16,

- Law: Formula

Sum of trump (both hands) -11 = sum of the bids.

- So $8+8=16-11=5$ or do not bid 3 over 3 vulnerable only non-vulnerable.

(2) Bid to the level of the total trumps provided you have a singleton or a doubleton.

Tricks or the Law?

- The Law of Total Tricks says to never bid three over three vulnerable and to always bid to the sum of your trumps. Is the latter sound advice?
- Let's look at a typical example.
- Your partner opens 1♠ and your right hand opponent intervenes with the bid of 2♥. What is your bid holding the following hand?
- ♠AJ1054 ♥54 ♦A102 ♣987
- You have 11 dummy points in support of spades and two aces. Depending on your methods do you cue bid 3♥ showing 3+ card support and 10+ points, or do you bid 3♣, playing Reverse Bergen, to show 10-12 **dummy** points, or with five spades, "following the law", just bid 4♠ - you have a 10-card trump fit? Bid to the level of the total trumps!

Follow the Law?

- Following the “Law” many club players may bid 4♠.
- However for the law to work, the most important ingredient is the trick potential of your hand, which the law ignores.
- The extra trumps **MUST WIN** extra tricks!
Thus, you need **5-card support plus a singleton or at least two doubletons** and your flat distribution just does not qualify.

Beware of the Law!

- The best bid is perhaps a cue bid of 3♥ and if partner bids 3♠, pass or playing Reverse Bergen, opener bids 3♦, which asks do you have 12 dummy points? And, with only 11 your bid is 3♠. Partner will pass.
- Partner held the following hand: ♠KQ832 ♥106 ♦Q102 ♣AJ2. Even 3♠ may not make. Do not follow the Law blindly! My advice is to “think tricks”!

Do you follow the Law of Total Trumps?

- Partner opens 3♥ which show 7 hearts, all are vulnerable, and your RHO passes. What are your bids with the following hands? All Vulnerable!
- ♠A52 ♥KJ2 ♦A102 ♣10987 (Hand 1)
- ♠A2 ♥KJ2 ♦AK98765 ♣7 (Hand 2)
- ♠82 ♥KJ4 ♦AK9876 ♣876 (Hand 3)
- Following the “Law” many may bid 4♥ with 3-card support, a total of 10 trumps. However, remember to think tricks, not points or the total trumps!

It is all about Tricks!

Hand 1

♠A52 ♥KJ2 ♦A102 ♣10987

- You have 12 points and 3 trumps. You should bid game, but which one, 4♥ or 3NT? Unless partner has a working side honor, nine tricks is your limit on any lead but a club. And you will survive a club lead, unless the leader has 5+clubs. 3NT is safer than 4♥.

Hand 2

- ♠A2 ♥KJ2 ♦AK98765 ♣7
- You have 17 dummy points and using the rule of 17, 4♥ clearly makes. But, do you have a slam?
- Assume partner has 2 of the top 3 honors or 3 of the top 5 honors, for example, ♠xx ♥AQ10xxxx ♦x ♣xxx with no side tricks and shortness in diamonds.
- After a club lead and a spade switch, attacking dummy's entry. Declarer will succeed against a 4-1 diamonds and 3-0 trump splits. How?
- Win the spade, play a heart to your hand, a diamond to the ace, and ruff a diamond high, If diamonds are 4-1 continue with a low heart to dummy and ruff another diamond high. Return to dummy in trumps and claim your slam.
- Do not just bid 4♥, but; bid 4♣ as weak 1430 RKCB for hearts. If you do not play this convention, bid 4♠ as 1430 kickback for hearts or at the very least bid 4NT!

Hand 3

- ♠82 ♥KJ4 ♦AK9876 ♣876
- You have 13 dummy points so bid 4♥ to advance the pre-emptive bid. The opponents may make a game in spades or clubs. If you get doubled in 4♥ you will be down 2 for -500!
- What have we learned?
- **Tricks are more important than points or the Law.**

SST Rule

- When opening one of a major, a splinter bid shows 3/4 card support for the major suit bid and usually 13+ Working HCP and a SST=0-3 for both partners. One applies the SST Rule
- **Opener adds his HCP to 13.**
- **With 19-21 HCP then $13 - \text{SST} = \# \text{ of tricks possible}$.**
- If the SST in both hands = 2, then we have 11 tricks with a singleton in both hands, with a **void and singleton** $13 - (\text{SST}=1) = 12$. **A SLAM**
- If the total HCP= 22-24 in both hands, you gain a trick. So, with singletons in both hands $13 - (\text{SST}=2) + 1 = 12!$ And with 25-27 you gain 2 tricks.
-
- NOTE: For that for those unusual hands with separate 2 voids, $13 - 0 = 13$, a grand Slam!
-
- The SST Rule was developed by Mike Lawrence and Anders Wirgen.

A Modern Splinter Convention

- Singletons
- 1♠ - pass - 3♥* (singleton) – to ask where, bid next step (3♠*)
- Then 4♥* - 4♣* - 4♦* show singletons
- 1♥ - pass - 3♠* (singleton) – to ask where, bid next step (3NT)
- Then 4♣* - 4♦* show singletons and 4♥* = spades (singleton)
- If you do not need to know where the singleton is located, since it may help the opponents, bid 4NT as 1430 Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKCB) --- Or you may use 3NT as 1430 Baby RKCB to keep the steps at a lower level (Some use kickback bid of 4♠ for hearts). Or, you may next use cue bids.
- *=alert

Continued Bids

- Voids
- 1♠ - pass - 4♣*/4♦*(void in suit bid) and 3NT* = heart void.
- 1♥ - pass - 4♣*/4♦* (voids in suit bid) and 3NT* = spade void.
- However, if you play some version of Bergen/Reverse Bergen/Combined Bergen Raises then 3NT* cannot be used to show 3-card support with 13-15 Dummy points over a major suit bid. And, you must give up the 4♣* and 4♦* Swiss bids. Not a big Deal!
- **The Void bids initiates the Exclusion Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKCB) Convention --- which assumes the agreed upon Major and EXCLUDES the void suit.**

Exclusion Responses

- The responses are NOT 1430/3014 RKCB, but works using steps:
- First Step = 0 Keycards
- 2nd step = 1 Keycard without the Queen
- 3rd step = 1 Keycard with the Queen
- 4th step = 2 Keycards without the Queen
- 5th step = 2 Keycards with the Queen
- 6th step = 3 Keycards without the Queen
- 7th step = 3 Keycards with the Queen
- **Note: some pairs use 1430 and others use steps 0 1 2 3 to show keycards as recommended by Kantar.**
- **Check with your Partnership – Partnership agreement.**

Bidding the slam

South	West	North	East
	1♠	2♦	3♥*(singleton)
Pass	3♠*(where)	Pass	4♦*(diamonds)
X	4♥ (Control)	Pass	4NT (1430)
Pass	5♦ (0-3)	Pass	6♣ (control)
Pass	6♥ (Control)	Pass	7♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Analysis

- East has 15 HCP and having two 5-card suits adds 2 length points for 17 points and opens 1♠.
- North passes and East sees that they have a spade fit with 12 HCP, but now adding 2 points for club length, 2 for his singleton and 1 for a quality suit – East has 17 working points.
- Playing the modern splinter convention, East bids 3♥* (a singleton somewhere). West now knows the SST for the two hands is 2 and $13-2=11$ tricks with only 19-21 working points. With 22-24, they have 12 tricks. And with 25-27 they have 13 tricks.

Continued Bidding

- West has slam interest; but where is the singleton? The asking bid is the next step or 3♠*. So east bids 4♦*. some may bid 4 diamonds directly as a splinter bid, but is it a singleton or a void? With the modern splinter convention you know voids immediately.
- West next bids his control 4♥ (A/K) and east bids 4NT (1430).
- West responds 5♦ = (0/3). East cue bids 6♣ and west cue bids 6♥ (a second control). West bids 7♠.
- The grand slam is reached with 27 Working Points since the opener adds 3 more points (for the singleton and doubleton) having found a fit called “Bergen Points”. See my Hand Evaluation Lesson on the Web site.

Rule of 44

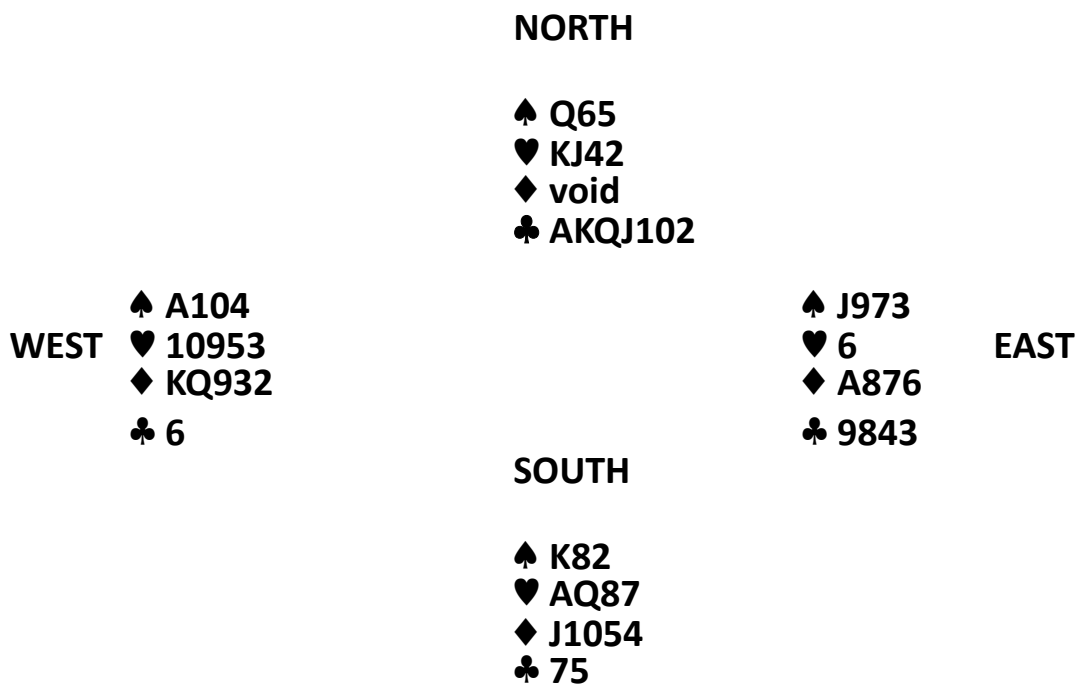
- When you open 2♣, should you bid 2NT or two of a major?
- If you intend to bid 2NT, you should have 22-24 HCP and notrump distribution. This is not the case when you bid a major 2♥ or 2♠. What are critical are losers and quick tricks, not points! What is needed?
- To open 2♣ and then bid a major requires at least five cards in the major, **NO MORE THAN FOUR LOSERS** and a minimum of **FOUR QUICK TRICKS** (A=1, K=½, KQ =1); **the rule of 44**.
- **Given these two requirements, open TWO CLUBS**, independent of points with a 5-card suit.
- Marty Bergen in the September 2009 issues of the “Bridge Bulletin” (page 50) also reviews this approach, but he did not name it as the Rule of 44.

The rule of 44 applied

- Let's look at an example: You hold the hand
- ♠AKQJ2 ♥AKQ10 ♦76 ♣7.
- You have only 19 HCP + one length point or twenty starting points. But, you have three losers in the minors (less than four losers) and four quick tricks (two aces and two KQ combinations); **using the rule of 44, open the hand 2♣.**

Example of Rule 44

Dealer is North



Example continued

- **Approach One (1♣)**

- | South | West | North | East |
|-------------|------|-----------|----------|
| | | 1♣ | Pass |
| 1♥ | Pass | 4♦*(S/V) | Pass |
| 4♠ | Pass | 4NT | Pass |
| 5♣(1/4) | Pass | 5♦(Q-ask) | Pass |
| 5NT(y-More) | Pass | 6♥ | All Pass |

- *=Alert

- With 19 points (16HCP + 2 length points+1 for quality the suit) south opens 1♣ (a 4 loser hand).

Analysis of Bidding

- The 4♦* bid shows heart support with a singleton/void (delayed splinter). Now south shows a control in spades (1st or 2nd) and cue bids 4♠.
- Playing 1430, North bids 4NT and with one keycard south responds 5♣ (1/4). North next bids 5♦ (the queen asking bid). Having the queen and the spade king, south bids 5NT.
- If the king were a lower ranking king, one would bid 6 of the king suit to show the king and the queen of trump. Missing one keycard, south bids 6♥.
- If your agreement is that a delayed splinter bid shows a void, like in exclusion keycard Blackwood, then south must exclude the diamond suit when responding to the bid of 4NT playing 1430 or 3014 RKCB.
- With 4 quick tricks and 4 losers, **rule of 44 with a 5-card suit**, some may open the hand 2♣; this prevents partner from passing the bid of one club.

Another approach

- **Approach Two (2♣)**

-

• South	West	North	East
		2♣	Pass
• 2♦(A/K)	Pass	3♣	Pass
• 3♥(control)	Pass	4♥	Pass
• 4NT	Pass	5NT(Even w Void)	Pass
• 6♥	All Pass		

Analysis of Two Club Bidding

- Opening two clubs, the bid of 2♦ shows at least one control (A/K), which is no longer alerted or announced so please say nothing unless asked.
- North next bids his suit and south bids 4♥ to show his control (at least one A/K). With four hearts, north bids 4♥.
- South next bids 4NT (1430 for hearts the agreed suit) and with a void in diamonds, north bids 5NT (2/4 keycards with a void).
- South bids the heart slam, assuming two keycards. With the worthless club doubleton south does not bid no-trump.
- Next Page – Play of the Hand.

Play of the Hand

- Opening Lead by west ---K♦
- You clearly must trump the diamond lead. But then what?
- If you continue to draw trump and they break poorly, you make only one diamond ruff, four hearts and six clubs; or, only 11 tricks. When you eventually play spades you will no longer have trumps, which allows the opponents to cash at least one diamond trick.
- Playing two rounds of trump you get the bad new – a 4-1 break.
- So now you now play spades, but which spade? Do you play the queen or lead a spade to the king?

Play Continued

- If you play a spade to the spade king, west may win and play another diamond. You will be blocked in dummy and forced to play clubs. If west now ruffs and plays spades you will not make your slam. Hence, you must play the spade queen at trick four.
- If it holds, you draw trumps and cash your clubs. If either opponent takes the spade ace, and plays another diamond, you ruff cross to your spade king draw trumps and run your clubs.
- **Count your tricks and have a plan. Many times you must postpone drawing trumps.**

Rule of 64

When opening a hand that is 6-4 major-minor, show the four-card suit only if the number of HCP in the four-card suit is greater than or equal to the number of HCP in the six-card suit.

If this is not the case, rebid the six-card suit and do not show the four-card suit; except if you are 6-4 in the majors; show the other major.

Rule of 210

- How many times have you heard bridge players say that the 5-level belongs to the opponents? **THIS IS NOT THE CASE IN COMPETITIVE AUCTIONS!**
- If you are in a competitive auction and the opponents have bid to the 5-level, do you compete, double or pass. You may use the rule of 210.
-
- With TWO (2) cards in the opponents bid suit you should DOUBLE for penalty.
- With ONE (1) card in their suit pass.
- With ZERO (0) cards in their suit, compete to the five level.
- For example you are bidding diamonds and they are bidding clubs. Use the rule to determine whether or not you should bid five diamonds over five clubs, double, or pass.
- This is also the case for hearts over diamonds or spades over hearts. Remember the rule of 210; simple!

Negative Slam Double

- The rule comes from **Negative Slam Doubles**, which are used to decide whether to sacrifice, or not.
- Over a slam bid, the second hand doubles to show no defensive tricks but passes with one or more tricks.

Example:

1♥ - 2♠ - 4♥ - 4♠
6♥ - X

- This Double indicates the player has no defensive tricks and, assuming partner's hand is limited to offensive values (low ODR=Offense to Defense Ratio), suggests partner make a sacrifice slam bid (usually with favorable or equal vulnerability).

5 Over 5- Example 1

North	East	South	West
		1♥	2♦
Pass	3♦	4♥	5♦
Pass	Pass	?	

Do you bid 5♥, Pass, or X.

Using the Rule you must pass!

Some may X because of your distribution – two singletons. Bidding 5 over 5 will cost you perhaps -500 (down 2) and 5♦ goes down one.

5 Over 5 - Example 2

North	East	South	West
	Pass	2♠	3♥
Pass	4♥	Pass	Pass
4♠	X	Pass	5♥
Pass	Pass	?	

Do you bid 5♠, Pass, or X.

Using the Rule of 210 you must bid 5♠!

Some may double 5♥ for down 1.

You can make five spades and if the opponents X, it is worth 650!
With the A♣ and K♣ and two spades east may X 5♠.

Rule of 88

- Your partner opens 1NT with 15-17 HCP and you are 4-4 in the majors' with 0-7/8 HCP what is your agreement for each of the following hands?
- Hand 1 ♠K542 ♥A974 ♦765 ♣102 (7HCP)
- Hand 2 ♠K542 ♥AJ74 ♦765 ♣102 (8HCP)
- Hand 3 ♠K1053 ♥AJ94 ♦1092 ♣102 (8HCP)
- You were told that to employ the Stayman Convention (the bid of 2♣) that you must have a 4-card major and 8+ HCP, but it is not recommended with 4-3-3-3 distributions; since you have no ruffing values. However, what is one to do when you are 4-4 in the majors with only 0-7/8 HCP? **With all three hands you MUST bid 2♣, do not pass 1NT.**
- If your are 4-3 on the majors, you need 4 diamonds and 0-7/8 HCP. This allows you to pass 2♦.

Next Bids

- If partner bids 2♦, bid 2♥* with Hands 1 & 2 – Crawling Stayman which asks partner to pick his best 3-card major, or to pass or correct. If partner bids either 2♥/2♠, you will pass. If partner is 2-2 in the majors, he will bid 3♣/3♦; then pass. Crawling Stayman also works when 4-3 in the majors with 4 diamonds. You will pass 2♦ or again bid 2♥; pass or correct.
- With Hand 3, use the **Rule of 88 with eight cards higher than the 8 and 8HCP**. After the bid of 2♦, bid 2NT as invitational. If partner bids 2♥/2♠ you will pass. If you had 9HCP, bid 2♠/3♥.

Another example

You have 8 HCP, but are only 4-3 in the majors with no 5-card suit; but have a 4-card diamond suit.

Hand 4 ♠10532 ♥KQ9 ♦K1092 ♣96

Again use the Rule of 88, bid 2♣. If partner bids your major great, if not you can pass 2♦.

If you are 4-4-4-1 and weak 0-8 HCP again bid 2♣ as Garbage Stayman and pass any 2-level bid

Rule of 11 for Suit Leads

- If the opponents make 4th best lead, subtract the spot on the card led from 11.
- The Rule of 11 (15-4) is used for placing the outstanding higher cards when partner makes a fourth best lead.
- One subtracts the spot of the card led from eleven to determine the number of higher cards in the remaining three hands.
- Since the high cards in the dummy and your hand can be seen, the remaining cards are with declarer. This information is quite useful in deciding which card to play on the trick and how to play the suit if you take the trick. The leads are made against suit contracts and notrump contracts.
- However, look at the opponents CC since many may make attitude leads against NT or coded 9 and 10 leads.
- If the answer (based upon the calculation) does not make sense, the card led may not be fourth best. **Many use attitude leads against NT or BOSTON (Bottom of something Top of nothing).**

When you lead 4th best!

- **Lead the suit that is the longest and strongest** in the combined hands of the partnership. Save your high cards in other suits to recapture the lead after your long suit has been established.
- As west You hold – what do you lead? The Opponents are playing 4♠

♠ Q8653
♥ A5
♦ 93
♣ J872

- Clearly 5♠
- Your partner East uses the rule of 11 (11-5=6)

Layout

North

♠976

West

♠Q8653

East

♠J102

South

♠?

Using the Rule of 11

- As east you now know that dummy, you and the declarer have 6 cards higher than the 5.
- Counting 3 in dummy and you holding 2 means that declarer has $6-5=1$.
- The Ace, King or Queen.

Lead 4th best Heart? Or make an Attitude lead?

The bidding when 1NT - 3NT and the opponents did not bid Stayman.

You HOLD

♠ A3
♥ Q1096
♦ A987
♣ Q106

What do you lead?

A Major lead

- You want a spade return, and they probably have the minors.
- So lead you shortest major 3♠ – Not 4th best heart or diamond!
- You want a spade return with the diamond entry.
- This also applies over the bidding sequence 1NT PPP.

3rd and 5th Leads against Suit Contracts

- When playing third and fifth best leads the concepts remain the same. Using fifteen as the base, subtract from fifteen the card led (**third or fifth best**).
- If partner's lead is third best, subtract spot card from 12 (15-3). If partner's lead is fifth best, subtract spot card from 10 (15-5).
- If you are not sure, try both; one of the answers is likely to make more sense than the other, giving you an idea of partner's holdings.
- One subtracts the spot of the card led from 12/10 to determine the number of higher cards in the remaining three hands.

What do the Leads imply?

- 3rd and 5th opening leads were originally designed for suit contracts and almost NEVER Notrump.
- **From a four card suit, the third highest card is led. From a five card suit (or longer), the fifth highest card is led.**
- Examples:
 - K953 - lead the 5. 5 is high $12-5=7$ cards higher
 - Q9762 - lead the 2. 2 is low $10-2=8$ cards higher
 - J86532 - lead the 3. 3 is low $10-3=7$ cards higher
 -
- The major benefit of third and fifth leads is that they help your partner gauge your suit length in addition to the outstanding cards.

Never fourth Best!

- Playing 4th best “standard” leads, the 2 would be led from both K92 and K972. Playing third and fifth however, the lead of a 2 always indicates a three or five card suit. It's easier for partner to try guess whether you hold three or five cards in the suit, rather than whether you hold three or four.
- A disadvantage of third and fifth leads is that the third highest card can sometimes be too costly to lead. For example, leading the 9 from KJ92 can easily lose a trick.
- For more on this examples see http://www.bridgebum.com/rule_of_10_12.php

More on 3rd and 5th Leads

- Alternatively, many players use third and fifth leads from an even/odd number of cards, respectively. The opening leader leads the third highest card from an even number of cards in a suit, and the fifth highest card from an odd number. **Look at the CC and ask!**
- Examples:
 - K953 - lead the 5.
 - Q9762 - lead the 2.
 - J86532 - lead the 6.
- The difference between the original designed practice is subtle - from a six card suit, the third highest card is led instead of the fifth highest card. This is the primary premise of the Journalist System of Leads.

8 Ever 9 Never

- When **finessing for the queen**, with nine cards and no information, the odds for a drop are 52:48 vs. 50:50 for finesse!
- This is a nominal difference.
- In general, if the finesse is into the safe hand, even with nine cards, one would finesse, with no information from the bidding; it is better to play for the drop of the queen.

10 Ever 11 Never

- A similar rule applies when **finessing for the king**; with eleven cards, it is again better to play for the drop; however, with ten cards, finesse. Again, the probability is small, about 52 percent vs. 50 percent.
- If the king is missing and you have 11 cards, only two cards are outstanding in the suit. If they split evenly (1-1) which occurs 52% of the time, the king will drop. A 2-0 split occurs only about 48% of the time. Thus play for the drop!
- While simple rules may be used for the king and the queen, what happens missing the Jack? Suppose you have Q72 and AK106 in a suit. Do you finesse or play for the drop? You have seven hearts and the opponents have six. If they split 3-3, the jack will drop.
- This is referred to as the Finesse Drop Test “FDT”. Simply count the out standing cards!

Rule of 22

- To determine whether or not to open a hand in the first or second seat, one often uses the rule of 22.
- **If the number of high card points and the number of cards in your two longest suits add to 20 and you have two quick tricks, open the hand.**
- In the third seat, one only needs 1 and one-half quick tricks (the rule of $21 \frac{1}{2}$).
- The Rule of 15 is used in the 4th seat not the Rule of 22. Some continue to use the Rule of 20!

Examples

♠ 108
♥ K10763
♦ 7
♣ AK432

10 HCP + 5♥ + 5♣ + 2 quick tricks = 22. Open 1♥

♠ AQ9
♥ AJ82
♦ J107
♣ 543

12 HCP + 4♥ + 3 of any other suit + 2 Quick = 21. So Pass.

Rule of 20/19

- Same as the Rule of 22, but does not require 2 quick tricks. Some expert players believe that 22/20 is too limiting a barrier and prefer to use the Rule of 19.
- If the number of high card points and the number of cards in your two longest suits add to 20/19.
- The New ACBL convention charts which goes into effect in November 22, 2018 call a hand with “Average Strength” a hand with 10 HCP or meets the Rule of 19.

Rule of 15

A rule used for opening the bidding in fourth seat. You should open the bidding if the number of HCP and the number of spades equals fifteen. This assumes that spades are likely to be evenly divided between the two partnerships and that a fit in spades may exist.

In the 4th seat you should have an opening – no need for drury or 2-way drury! Why? You can always pass!

Drury only need be used in the 3rd seat!

Examples

The auction goes: PPP and you hold

♠AJ105
♥K1063
♦K7
♣432

You have 11 HCP and 4♠'s = 15 So open 1♠

♠AQ432
♥K2
♦J87
♣1094

You have 10 HCP and 5♠'s = 15 So again open 1♠.

♠J2
♥A54
♦AQ1054
♣853

You have 11 HCP and 2♠'s = 13 Pass do not let them find their heart fit.

Rule of 7 (Hold-Up)

- When playing 3NT contracts and having only one stopper in the suit led headed by the ace, one may use the Rule of 7 to decide how many times to hold up.
- Rule: subtract the total number of cards you and dummy hold in the suit from seven. This is the number of times you should hold up when the opponents lead the suit.
- You are playing 3NT and you have Axx in dummy and xxx in you hand and the suit is lead. Since $7-6=1$; you must hold up once and take the second trick if the suit is continued.
- Suppose you have Axx versus xx and the suit is lead. Since $7-5=2$ you must hold-up twice.
- What about 1NT or 2NT? Add 4 to the Level of Contract (1/2/3) and subtract the number of cards you hold in the suit led.
- $3+4 = \text{rule of 7}$ 3NT 7 less the #of cards (in hand and dummy) = times you hold up
- $2+4 = \text{rule of 6}$ 2NT 6 less the #of cards (in hand and dummy) = times you hold up
- $1+4 = \text{rule of 5}$ 1NT 5 less the #of cards (in hand and dummy) = times you hold up

Example

The bidding goes 1NT – 3NT – you are sitting N-S and west leads the ♠4 (low from an honor).

Dummy holds ♠2

And you hold ♠QJ94

You play the ♠2 and East wins with the ♠A and returns the ♠6. Do you duck or play an honor?

Using the rule of 7, $7-5=2$, you must duck and do not play an honor.

This rule as with others we have discussed in this lesson is never an absolute; but, a guide.

It does not always work! See for example the article by Larry Cohen on his Web site:

www.larryco.com/bridge-learning-center/detail/436

Rule of 7 (Points)

- The opponents open at the 1-level and your partner overcalls 1NT (15-17). Do you play systems on/off?
- There are 40 HCP in a deck so $40 - 12 - 15 = 13$ and $13 / 2 = 7$ on average. So each partner has about 7HCP.
- If you play systems off, the strong opening bidder is on lead so do not use transfers; instead bid your 5/4-card suit or use cue-bid stayman. No need to play transfers with strong NT overcalls!

Barry Crane

- **Barry Cranes Commandments:**
- 1. Never pull partners penalty double.
- 2. Always take a sure profit.
- 3. Watch out for the three level.
- 4. The more you bid, the more you got (no fast arrival here).
- 5. 7's are singletons.
- 6. Don't bid grand slams at Swiss Teams.
- 7. Don't put cards in partner's hand.
- 8. (Only) Jesus saves.
- 9. Don't eat between sessions.
- 10. Never ask "How's your game ?".
- 11. Never gloat.
- 12. The queen is over the jack in the minors and under the jack in the majors.

References

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New ACBL Convention Charts (effective 11/22/2018) – See the Education “TAB” on our Website