

## Marty Bergen's "Adjust-3 Method" For Hand Evaluation When Considering a No-Trump Opening of Balanced Hands

The standard, high-card, point-count system of hand evaluation is referred to as the **4-3-2-1-0** point count system; where the five top honor cards of each suit are valued as follows: Aces = **4**, Kings = **3**, Queens = **2**, Jacks = **1**, and Tens = **0**. While this method of assignment is accurate, a computer analysis of bridge hands shows that this standard point-count system tends to *undervalue* Aces and Tens and to *overvalue* Queens and Jacks ("**Quacks**"). Only Kings are correctly valued.

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Let's look at two hands:  
WHAT WOULD YOU BID WITH EACH OF THE FOLLOWING HANDS?

Hand (1): **♠A43 ♥K73 ♦92 ♣AKT32**  
Hand (2): **♠QJ6 ♥QJ7 ♦KJ3 ♣KQJ2**

Using the "**standard/traditional**" point-count system for hand evaluation, counting just HCP's, Hand (1) with 14 HCP, open **1C**; and Hand (2) with 16 HCP, open **1-NT**!

IF THESE WERE YOUR ANSWERS --- You are mistaken!  
Hand (1) should be opened **1-NT**, and Hand (2) should be opened **1C**!

In reality, we will see that, due to over-evaluation and under-evaluation of honors, Hand (1) is actually stronger than Hand (2)!

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To compensate for the over and under valuation when using the "**standard/traditional**" method, Marty Bergen developed the "**Adjust-3 Method**." Why adjust three? Because the accuracy of the HCP in a hand depends on the difference of overvalued and undervalued honors by the value of three.

Let's see how the process works. With a dealt evenly-balanced hand, where one is considering opening either **1-NT** or **2-NT**, one goes through six simple steps to employ the "**Adjust-3 Method**:"

Step 1: Add up your HCP using the table presented earlier – **A (4), K (3), Q (2), J (1)**.

Step 2: Count the number of Aces and 10's ("**Undervalued**" honors).

Step 3: Count the number of Queens and Jacks ("**Overvalued**" honors).

Step 4: Subtract the smaller number from the larger number.

Step 5: Evaluate the difference:

If the difference is between **0-2**, make **no adjustment**

If the difference is within the range **3-5**, **adjust by 1 point**

If the difference is **6, or more** (rare), **adjust by 2 points**

Step 6: If the number of Aces and 10's is more, **add**;

If the number of Queens and Jacks is more, **subtract**

Let's look at these two hands, once again:  
NOW WHAT WOULD YOU BID WITH EACH OF THE FOLLOWING HANDS?

Hand (1): **♠A43 ♥K73 ♦92 ♣AKT32** (14 + 1 = 15 --- Open **1-NT**)

Hand (2): **♠QJ6 ♥QJ7 ♦KJ3 ♣KQJ2** (16 - 2 = 14 --- Open **1C**)

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**Let's Practice Using Marty Bergen's "Adjust-3 Method" For Hand Evaluation**  
**When Considering Bidding Evenly-Balanced Hands**

Hand (1): ♠AT8 ♥KT8 ♦A6532 ♣AQ  
(17 + 1 = 18 --- Open 1D, and then Re-Bid 2-NT)

Hand (2): ♠KQT ♥AQ8 ♦KJ ♣ QJ862  
(18 - 1 = 17 --- Open 1-NT)

Hand (3): ♠AK8 ♥AT8 ♦AT632 ♣A9  
(19 + 2 = 21 --- Open 2-NT)

Hand (4): ♠KQJ ♥KQ8 ♦KQJ ♣ KJ86  
(21 - 2 = 19 --- Open 1C, and then Re-Bid 2-NT)

Hand (5): ♠AT8 ♥KT8 ♦KT32 ♣A95  
(14 + 1 = 15 --- Open 1-NT)

Hand (6): ♠AQ8 ♥Q98 ♦KQ732 ♣Q6  
(15 - 1 = 14 --- Open 1D, and then Re-Bid 1-NT)

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