

Bridge Tips - "Pearls"

1a. When responding to Partner's opening 1-NT, *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 or no trumping capacity in Responder's hand with such distributions, and this holding will oft times produce 3-NT, but only 3 Hearts or 3 Spades, not 4; and if it does, by chance, produce 4H or 4S, than it will also produce 4-NT as well, for a better match-point score.

1b. When responding to Partner's opening 1-NT, also *do not* employ the "Stayman" convention when you, as Responder, realize that the cumulative HCP values held by the Partnership are 29 HCP's or more. Even if an 8-card "Golden Fit" were 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 fewer than 29 HCP's (26-28 HCP's) then seeking a 4H or 4S contract is viable.

1c. When responding to Partner's opening 1-NT, also *do not* employ the "Stayman" convention when you, as Responder, cannot, with efficacy, handle all three of the potential responses ("2D," "2H," or "2S") that could result from your "2C" inquiry. Unless Responder is capable of either "*Passing*" any of these potential responses, using a "Smollen" conventional continuation, else a 2-NT invitational bid or a 3-NT game-level response, a "Stayman" inquiry cannot be used.

2. When leading from KQTX or KQTX(X) against a No-Trump contract, the proper lead is the "Q" (not the "K") asking Partner to drop either the "J" or the "A". If the Jack or the Ace is played by Partner, it gives the team justification to continue the play of the suit at trick #2. Absent Partner playing the Jack or the Ace, the Opening Leader will abandon play of the suit until Partner or Declarer plays the suit.

3. 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, the 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).

4. "4-NT" 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. "1-NT" – "4-NT" 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 "6-NT" with 16 or 17 HCP's (13 or 14 HCP's in the "Acol System"). Similarly, "1-NT" – "5-NT" is also quantitative, asking Opener to go to "6-NT" with 15 HCP's (12 HCP's in the "Acol Bidding System"), and to go to "7-NT" with 16 or 17 HCP's (13 or 14 HCP's in the "Acol Bidding System").

5. When Responder to an opening No-Trump bid by Partner holds both a 4-card Major suit and a 5-card-or-longer Major suit holding, and game-values, Responder must use “Stayman,” never “Jacoby Transfers.” When holding two potential 8-card or longer Major suit holdings, the 4-4 Major suit fit; i.e; the fit with the holdings whose numbers are closest to parity, is the better trump fit, allowing the other Major suit fit; i.e., the fit with the greatest disparity in its holdings, to become the side suit upon which, once established, can be used to discard potential losers in either of the Minor suits.

6. The Rule of 11: When in a No-Trump Contract, if the opening lead is assumed to be the 4th-highest, Declarer can 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, Declarer’s, Dummy’s and Leader’s Partner, 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 just leave it out, allowing the Defense to take it whenever and at the point in the play of the hand that they so choose. If you were, alternatively, to play trumps, eliminating the single outstanding top trump, it would cost you two of your trumps, and unnecessarily giving up the initiative, neither of which you, sometimes, cannot afford.

8. In order 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 4th 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, have a Partnership understanding 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 being natural. This agreement will avoid confusion and misunderstanding.