

Bridge Tips - "Pearls"

1a. When responding to Partner's opening 1-NT, *never* use "Stayman" (Looking for a 4-card Major suit fit) when holding a (4-3-3-3) or a (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 3H or 3S, not 4 of either Major suit; and if it were, by chance, to produce 4H or 4S, then it will usually produce 4-NT as well, for a much 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 to be found, such holdings will usually 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, duplicate score. If the Partnership holds fewer than 29 HCP's (26-28 HCP's) then seeking a 4H or 4S contract is practical.

1c. When responding to Partner's opening 1-NT, also *do not* employ the "Stayman" Convention when you, as Responder, cannot, effectively, 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 three potential responses, using the "Smollen Convention," a 2-NT invitational call, or a 3-NT game-level response, a "Stayman" inquiry *cannot* be used.

(See "Crawling Stayman" and "Garbage Stayman")

2. When leading from KQTX or KQXXX(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 he/she holds one of the missing top honors. If the Jack or the Ace is played by Partner, it gives the Player who has led the Queen 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 at a later trick.

3. Defenders *must* develop a signaling technique for their discards. In "Standard" signaling practice, *when Partner leads a suit* you must give an *attitude* signal - (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. So as to avoid confusion, a "4-NT" bid is always to be considered as the initiation of the Blackwood Convention; i.e., asking for Partner to evidence the number of Aces held in order to explore for the feasibility of a Slam-level contract, with three (3) exceptions.

(a.) "4-NT" is *not* Blackwood, but rather a *quantitative* bid by Responder, following a 1-NT opening, asking Opener to either "Pass" with a minimum 15 HCP's (12 HCP's in the "ACOL Bidding System") and to go to 6-NT with 16 or 17 HCP's (13 or 14 HCP's in the "ACOL Bidding System").

Similarly, "4-NT" is *not* Blackwood, but rather a *quantitative* bid by Responder, following a 2-NT opening, asking Opener to "Pass" with a minimum of his original HCP count, or to accept the small Slam invitation and to re-bid 6-NT, if holding a maximum high-card point count.

(b.) "4-NT" is *not* Blackwood, but rather *quantitative*, when no suit fit has been found and a "4-NT" bid is made immediately following a game-level, 3-NT bid by his/her Partner.

(c.) Lastly, “4-NT” is not Blackwood, but rather quantitative, following a 1-NT, (2-NT) opening bid, followed by a Major suit, “**Jacoby Transfer**” of “2D,” or “2H” (“3D,” or “3H”) and, finally, by a “4-NT” call by Opener’s, responding Partner. This bidding sequence seeks a Slam-level contract in the referenced, Major suit, if Opener holds a maximum of his/her high-card values previously shown for his/her 1-NT, or 2-NT, opening call. (**Note:** A “4-NT” bid following a similar sequence, but, one having alternatively used “**Texas Transfer**” bids, is *Ace-Asking (Blackwood)*, not quantitative.)

5. Similarly, a “5-NT” call is also quantitative, similar to {4-(1)}; i.e., following an opening bid of 1-NT, 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).

6. **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, with 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 a distribution closest to parity, is the better Trump fit, allowing the other Major suit fit; i.e., the fit with the greatest disparity in its distribution, to become the side suit upon which, once established, can be used to discard potential losers in either or both of the Minor suits.

7. **“The Rule of 11”:** When in a No-Trump Contract, if the opening lead is assumed to be the 4th-highest from the Opponent’s longest and strongest suit, Declarer can deduct the “pip” 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 the 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 play the cards held, so as to not unnecessarily utilize high cards wastefully.

8. **“The Rule of 1”:** When there is just one (1) piece of Trump out (not yet removed) higher than yours, it is normally best to just leave it out, allowing the Defense to take it whenever they so choose in the continuing play of the hand. If you were, alternatively, to play Trumps, eliminating the single outstanding top Trump, it would, both, cost you two of your Trumps, and unnecessarily give up the initiative, neither of which you, sometimes, can afford.

9. **In order to calculate how the outstanding cards in any suit be distributed statistically between the Opponents, if the number of outstanding cards are 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 is 5 (an odd number), statistically, most often, they are split evenly; i.e. 3-2; and if the number of outstanding cards is 4 (an even number), most often, they are split unevenly; i.e., 3-1.

10. **“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 is fewer than 15. If the “Rule” is not satisfied (15 or more) “*pass*,” and do not open the bidding.

11. So as to, most easily, avoid confusion, establish a Partnership understanding that a “4C” bid is always “Gerber,” asking for Aces, only after a beginning or an ending No-Trump bid during any auction sequence, and that at any other time, it is construed as being “natural.” This agreement will avoid confusion, misunderstanding, and potential error.