



Hand Evaluation: Beyond the Point Count

The Point count is only a rough and ready estimate of the worth of a hand. Here are some ways to refine it:

1 Location of High Cards

What makes one hand better than another?

Honour cards in long suits, *supporting one another* and supported by good *intermediate* cards
Suppose partner raised 1NT to 2NT. Which of these 13 HCP hands make you want to bid 3NT?

♠ K754	♠ AJ109	♠ J96	♠ AJ
♥ A64	♥ K109	♥ K109	♥ 9732
♦ K43	♦ KQ86	♦ KQ1098	♦ AQJ
♣ K82	♣ 72	♣ A2	♣ J654

Sterile 4-3-3-3 distribution	Two possible work suits	Nice 5-card suit	Honours in short suits
No intermediates. NO!	Good intermediates. YES!	Good intermediates. YES!	Weak long suits. NO!

2 Indications from the Bidding

When an opponent bids a suit it is likely that he has honours in it.

This can increase or decrease the chances of *your* honour cards taking tricks.

You hold ♥KJ4 If RHO bids hearts he may hold ♥AQ and you will make two heart tricks
In this case you should *upgrade* the value of your honours and bid more
But if LHO bids hearts he may hold ♥AQ and you will make no heart tricks
Now you should *devalue* your honour cards and bid less.

You hold ♠ K85 If partner opens 1♦ you respond 2NT with your 11HCP
♥ AQ10 But if RHO overcalls 1♥ your ♥AQ10 may well make three tricks, so
♦ Q86 you are worth 3NT.
♣ 10954 If LHO opens 1♥ and partner doubles bid 2NT, not 3NT

3 The value of extra trump

A suit of AKQ8532 probably makes seven tricks, but only counts the same 9HCP as AKQ2.

A long suit that you can cash makes your hand *stronger* than the point count suggests.

To reflect this we add *one extra point* for each card above the minimum required for your bid.

When opening the bidding, add 1 *distribution* point for a five-card suit, 2 for a six-card suit.

When raising partner add 1 *distribution* point for a fifth trump, and 1 more for a sixth trump.

When the declaring side has extra trump – a *9, 10 or 11-card fit* – extra tricks are made by ruffing
Provided you have at least an 8-card fit you can add *distribution points* ('fit' points) for short suits.

Note: *add these points only when you have found a trump fit*

You count 3 distribution points for each void
2 distribution points for each singleton
1 distribution point for each doubleton

Say partner opens 1♠ and you hold one of these hands:

♠ KJ53	♠ KJ1053	♠ KJ1053	♠ 3
♥ 743	♥ 73	♥ -	♥ KJ532
♦ A72	♦ A752	♦ A7542	♦ A7542
♣ 982	♣ 92	♣ 982	♣ 84

8HCP, 4-card support	8HCP + 1 for the fifth	8 HCP + 1 for the fifth	Nice distribution, but
A normal raise to 2♠	spade, 2 more for two	spade, 3 for the void heart.	no known trump fit, so
No extra points	doubletons. Raise to 3♠	Bid 4♠	no extra points.
			Bid 1NT