

# COMMON-SENSE HAND EVALUATION

Lesson 1, 10 NOV 2011

Bob Boyd

**PROBLEM:** Flight C players miss a disproportionate number of games for two reasons: 1) as opener and overcaller, they often do not adhere to normal standards, and 2) as responder and advancer, they often focus too much on high-card points (HCP) rather than visualizing how the two hands fit together.

This week we'll focus on being a reliable partner by going over standards for opening bids. Next:

- Part 2: Overcalls
- Part 3: Responding to opening bids and overcalls

## STANDARDS:

- **The most important factor in getting to the right contract is being a reliable partner; agree what it takes and respect the agreement**
- What do you need to open one of a suit?
  - A good overview of various hand evaluation systems is at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hand\\_evaluation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hand_evaluation). Read it for fun only
  - Goren's 13 points, counting 4-3-2-1 HCP and 3-2-1 distribution?
  - 11 HCP, as in Precision?
  - Some supposed "expert" rule like the Rule of 20? Or maybe 19? 16 anyone?
  - Suit quality? Keep it simple—any 5-card suit is biddable
- My standards:
  - Count HCP only
  - Open almost all 12 HCP hands; exceptions:
    - "Quacks"—all or most points are in queens and jacks
    - Lacking at least one ace or two kings
  - With a singleton, reduce the HCP requirement to 11
  - With a void, reduce it to 10
  - Dangerous to go lower if you play Two-over-One
- Choose the correct suit
  - Play 5-card majors
  - Open the longest suit
  - With two 5-card suits, open the higher-ranking
  - With two 4-card minor suits, open the lower ranking
  - With two 4-card major suits, open your longer minor
  - Don't play a short club
- **Before you bid, think about your rebid** if partner doesn't raise or bid a suit you can support
  - If your rebid would embarrass you, **don't open**
    - Rebid a 5-card suit? **No big deal**
    - Rebid NT w/ a singleton? **Avoid if at all possible**
    - Reverse w/o strength? **Never!!!**

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- If your second suit is higher-ranking, are you strong enough to reverse (i.e., making a rebid in a higher-ranking suit)? What does it take to do that?
  - A good rule for 5-4 hands is 17 HCP
  - With 6-5 distribution, you can reduce that
- If your second suit is lower-ranking, you can bid it
  - A jump shift into a lower-ranking suit takes about the same strength as a reverse; with 6-5 distribution, it can be less than 17 HCP
  - With 6-4 distribution, it is usually preferable to bid your 4-card suit before rebidding your 6-card suit—partner will know 9 of your cards rather than 6
- **CAUTION:** Standards for two-suiters assume most of your HCP are in long suits; singleton kings and queens may not be worth their full value
- If you don't have a second suit, it takes 18-19 HCP to jump in NT
- A simple NT rebid shows a balanced hand not strong enough to open 1NT
- Should you open a balanced 15-17 HCP hand with a 5-card major 1NT? Yes, because it solves rebid problems, but some 15-counts can be treated as 14-counts
- How do you show a 6-card suit?
  - Simple rebid with up to 14-15 HCP
    - With an unbalanced hand, you may have to rebid a 5-card minor, like when you aren't strong enough to reverse into a 4-card major
    - With a balanced hand (no singleton or void), prefer NT to rebidding a 5-card minor
  - Jump in the suit with a strong hand; 16 HCP is a good rule, good 15 is OK
- When may a reliable partner violate standards?
  - Good texture is often worth a point
    - "Married" honors, tens and nines in long suits
    - Best example: Balanced hand with AK in one suit and A in another is worth a bid
  - Third seat
    - Open light at favorable vulnerability or with spades
    - How light? Might go as low as 9 HCP if you're playing Drury; if partner's invitational raise is a 3-bid, a good 10 or bad 11 is light enough

Questions? E-mail me at [bobbyd72@aol.com](mailto:bobbyd72@aol.com)

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**QUACKS**

♠ KJ42  
♥ QJ8  
♦ QJ52  
♣ Q7

1

**OPEN?**

♠ AK852  
♥ KJ42  
♦ 754  
♣ 3

**Yes**

4

**SHORT ♣?**

♠ AK85  
♥ K642  
♦ Q75  
♣ 42

**No**

7

**OPEN?**

♠ KJ42  
♥ K85  
♦ AJ52  
♣ 73

**Yes**

2

**OPEN?**

♠ AK852  
♥ K642  
♦ 7542  
♣ —

**Yes**

5

**Reverse**

S	W	N	E
1♥	P	1N	P
2♠			

*Higher Suit  
at  
Higher Level*

**OPEN?**

♠ KJ42  
♥ K85  
♦ A652  
♣ 73

**No**

3

**OPEN?**

♠ T9852  
♥ K642  
♦ AK42  
♣ —

**Yes**

6

**Reverse?**

♠ KQJ4  
♥ AKJ52  
♦ A54  
♣ 3

**Yes**

9

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Reverse?

♠ AQT43  
♥ AKJ852  
♦ 4  
♣ 3      **Yes**

10

OPEN 1NT?

♠ KJ4  
♥ AK852  
♦ A54  
♣ Q3      **Yes**

13

OPEN?

♠ QJT  
♥ AJT52  
♦ T94  
♣ K3      **Yes**

16

Jump Shift?

♠ AQT43  
♥ 52  
♦ AKJ8  
♣ A      **Yes**

11

OPEN 1NT?

♠ KJ4  
♥ AK852  
♦ A54  
♣ 43      **No**

14

3<sup>RD</sup> SEAT?

♠ Q85  
♥ AJT52  
♦ T94  
♣ K3      **Yes**

17

Jump Shift?

♠ AKJ853  
♥ AQT42  
♦ 4  
♣ 3      **Yes**

12

OPEN?

♠ Q85  
♥ AJ752  
♦ J94  
♣ K3      **No**

15

3<sup>RD</sup> SEAT?

♠ AQT52  
♥ 985 **Only**  
♦ T94 **w/**  
♣ K3 **Drury**

18