



THE

POCKET

GUIDE TO

ACOL BRIDGE

MARK HORTON • BARBARA SEAGRAM

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I. HOW GOOD IS YOUR HAND?

To answer this question, you need to consider two aspects of your hand:

high cards *and* distribution

COUNTING POINTS

Count the high card points (HCP) in your hand using the following table:

<i>Ace</i> = 4	<i>King</i> = 3
<i>Queen</i> = 2	<i>Jack</i> = 1

Counting Distribution

When making your initial valuation you can add one extra point for a five-card suit, two points for a six-card suit and so on.

Add your HCP to your distributional points to get the total points .

Here are some examples of how counting your total points works:

♠ A K J 8 6	HCP = 14
♥ Q 10 8	Dist. = 1
♦ A 4 2	Total = 15
♣ 6 4	

♠ A K 8	HCP = 12
♥ A J 9 7 5 4 3	Dist. = 3
♦ 4 2	Total = 15
♣ 6	

♠ A J 8	HCP = 13
♥ 2	Dist. = 2
♦ A K 4	Total = 15
♣ J 10 9 7 5 3	

Distributional points are only useful if you are going to play a trump contract, when short suits in either hand may enable you to score tricks by ruffing. If you are going to play in notrump, count only HCP.

WHY YOUR POINT COUNT CAN CHANGE

As the bidding progresses, you need to revalue your hand. The following rules can be used:

- If you have four or more cards in a suit partner has bid, you will probably be the dummy. Start fresh, and this time count dummy points as follows:

Void = 5

Singleton = 3

Doubleton = 1

Add these to your HCP.

♠ A 7 6 3

♥ 6

♦ A 4 3 2

♣ 5 4 3 2

HCP = 8

Dist. = 3

Total = 11

On this hand, if partner opens the bidding 1♠, you can add 3 dummy points to your 8 HCP for a total of 11.

- When partner has supported your suit, suggesting that it will probably be trumps, then reevaluate your distributional points as follows:

Add 1 point for the fifth card in a suit

Add 2 points for the sixth and each subsequent card in a suit

Add points for shortness as follows:

Void = 5 points

Singleton = 3 points

Doubleton = 1 point

However, don't count distribution points for shortness in partner's suits. This is *never* an asset.

Notice that once you have found a trump fit, both players can add on distributional points for shortages.

♠ A J 8	(first count)
♥ 6	HCP = 13
♦ A K 4	Dist. = 2
♣ J 10 9 7 5 3	Total = 15

If partner supports your clubs, count 3 for the 5th and 6th clubs and 3 for the singleton heart, and revalue the hand to 19 points.

♠ A K 8	(first count)
♥ A J 9 7 5 4 3	HCP = 12
♦ 4 2	Dist. = 3
♣ 6	Total = 15

If partner raises hearts, count 3 for your singleton, 1 for your doubleton, and 5 for your 5th, 6th and 7th hearts. This revalues the hand up to 21 points!

That may seem a lot, but once hearts have been supported your hand is greatly improved. All your little hearts should take tricks — in a sense each of them represents an extra king!

♠ A K J 8 6	(first count)
♥ Q 10 8	HCP = 14
♦ A 4 2	Dist. = 1
♣ 6 4	Total = 15

If partner raises spades, count 1 for the 5th spade and 1 for the doubleton, for a total of 16 points.

♠ A K Q 6	(first count)
♥ K J 10	HCP = 22
♦ A Q 3	Dist. = 0
♣ K 10 4	Total = 22

If partner supports your spades your original evaluation does not change — you have no distribution points to add on.

NEWCOMER/SOCIAL

A HANDY GUIDE WITH THE ANSWERS TO YOUR BRIDGE QUESTIONS

Do you ever need a quick hint about what to bid? Are you confused about what to lead from KJ10x? Have you forgotten what a reverse is?

If you answered 'Yes' to any of these questions, this is the book you need! And as well, it will be perfect for those times when you want to point to something and say "Look partner, it says here you should have done this!" – and win your argument!

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