



THE  
POCKET  
GUIDE TO  
BRIDGE

BARBARA SEAGRAM • RAY LEE

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**Master Point Press**

331 Douglas Ave.

Toronto, Ontario Canada M5M 1H2

(416) 781-0351

Internet: [www.masterpointpress.com](http://www.masterpointpress.com)

[www.masteringbridge.com](http://www.masteringbridge.com)

[www.bridgeblogging.com](http://www.bridgeblogging.com)

[www.ebooksbridge.com](http://www.ebooksbridge.com)

email: [info@masterpointpress.com](mailto:info@masterpointpress.com)

**Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data**

Barbara Seagram: The pocket guide to bridge

ISBN 978-1-55494-037-0

1. Contract bridge. I. Ray Lee, 1945 II. Title.

GV1282.3.S42 2002 795.41'5 C2001-904145-4

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program (BPIDP) for our publishing activities.

*Cover and Interior design* Olena S. Sullivan/New Mediatrix

*Interior format and copyediting* Deanna Bourassa

Printed and bound in Canada by Webcom Ltd.

2 3 4 5 6 7      06 05 04 03

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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:

*Ace = 4*

*King = 3*

*Queen = 2*

*Jack = 1*

A shortcut: 'The Royal Family'

$A + K + Q + J = 10$

There are two ways to count your **distributive points**; both work, so don't worry which one you use, or even if you use one and your partner uses the other:

### Method 1: count long suits

*1 point for the fifth card in a suit*

*1 more point for any card after the fifth*

### Method 2: count short suits

*Void = 3*

*Singleton = 2*

*Doubleton = 1*

Do not count short suit points for unprotected honors, which can be 'eaten up' by higher honors. So count no distributional points for

*Singleton K*

*Doubleton or singleton Q*

*Tripleton, doubleton or singleton J*

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 your short suits may enable you to score some tricks by ruffing. If you are going to play in notrump, count only HCP; if you are considering a trump contract, use total points to value your hand.

## 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 likely 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	HCP = 8
♦ A 4 3 2	Dist. = 3
♣ 5 4 3 2	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.