

## The Twelve Days of Bridge Tips

### Bridge Tip #1

In bidding, declarer play, and defense you need good rules to guide you, and you should be disciplined enough to follow them. In these bridge tips I will cite rules that I have seen broken most frequently in the games at the Bridge Studio.

**Rule - Against a suit contract never lead away from an ace on the opening lead.**

You can occasionally get a spectacularly good result by doing so, but too many bad things can happen to make it a good risk. I have seen this rule broken 5 times just against me in the past month.

### Bridge Tip #2

**Rule - With a few exceptions responder should not rebid a 5-card suit unless opener has raised.**

Thus in the sequences:

1D	1H	1D	1S	1D	1S	1D	1S
1S	<u>2H</u>	2D	<u>2S</u>	1NT	<u>2S</u>	2C	<u>2S</u>

Responder's rebid of his suit should show a weak hand (6-9 HCP) and a 6-card suit. Players that rebid a 5-card suit say, "Since I promised only a 4-card suit by my first bid, I must rebid it so partner will know I have five", and this sounds so logical.

However in these sequences opener will either often or always have a minimum hand (12-14 HCP), so responder's rebid of his suit should then usually end the auction. It is thus **not logical** to have only a 5-card suit.

Admittedly this can sometimes create rebidding problems when responder has an invitational or game-going hand. A major objective of the "Fourth Suit Forcing" and "New Minor Forcing" conventions is solving them.

### Bridge tip #3

**Rule - With a combined holding of 10 cards in a suit missing the King, the finesse offers a much better chance than playing for the drop.**

In 100 cases:

Finesse is right	37 times
Drop is right	13 times
Irrelevant	50 times

Thus the finesse is a 2.85/1 favorite.

I have witnessed many cases in which a declarer has gone against percentage. Of course holding:

A J T x x

Q x x x x

it can't hurt to lead the Queen, but don't assume that failure to cover means the King is off-side. Actually if you then play the ace, you are insulting your left hand opponent.

#### **Bridge Tip #4**

In his Complete Book on Takeout Doubles Mike Lawrence describes the takeout double as "the most useful, the most used, and the most misunderstood of all conventions". A double with 12 to 16+ HCP's over an opening bid of one of a suit should ideally have at least 3-card support for the other three suits. Slight deviations in shape are allowed, but if you follow these rules, you will avoid making bad doubles.

**Rule - Don't double with only two cards in an unbid major.**

With: S-Jx H-Kxxx D-Kxx C-AQxx  
Don't double over any opening except 1S.

**Rule - Don't double with a singleton in an unbid suit.**

With: S-Axxx H-KJxx D-KQxx C-x  
Don't double over any opening except 1C.

**Rule - Don't double when holding a 5-card major.**

With: S-AJxxx H-KQxx D-x C-Kxx  
Bid 1S over an opening of 1D. The problem with doubling is that you will never be able to show your 5-card spade suit. Doubling and then bidding spades shows a much better hand and suit.

I see at least one of these rules violated in almost every session.

**Lawrence's book is a must read!**

#### **Bridge Tip #5**

If the points are almost equally divided between the two sides, there is usually an advantage to declaring 1NT as opposed to defending against 1NT. Thus the following which I call Phil Brady's rule after a Philadelphia player that I first heard recite it.

**Rule - If the HCP's are about equally divided and bidding 1NT is at all logical based on distribution and stoppers, bid it before your opponent gets a chance to bid it.**

**Some sequences:**

1. <u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>	2. <u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>
1C	1H	<u>1NT</u>		1D	DbI	1S	<u>1NT</u>
3. 1C	P	1H	DbI	4. 1D	P	1H	1S
<u>1NT</u>				<u>1NT</u>			

**Recently holding: S-75 H-Q8643 D-AQ5 C-962** as South in sequence 1.) I passed over 1H and West bid 1NT. We were +50, while we would have been +90 or +120 by playing 1NT.

#### **Bridge Tip #6**

When responding to a 1NT opener with a weak hand (less than invitational strength), it is reasonable to use Stayman 2C when holding 4-4, 5-4, or 5-5 in the majors. If opener shows a major, you can gratefully pass. If opener denies a 4-card major by bidding 2D, you need rules to allow the auction to end.

**Holding 4-4** - Bid 2H over 2D. Opener must pass holding three hearts. If he has two hearts and three spades, he corrects to 2S.

**Holding 5-4** - Bid your 5-card major over 2D. If you have bid 2S, opener must pass. If you have bid 2H, opener again passes with three hearts and corrects to 2S with two.

**Holding 5-5** - Bid 2H. Opener will correct to 2S if you should be playing there.

### **Bridge Tip #7**

**Rule - When you have led 4th best against a NT contract when holding the Ace (say ATxxx), it is often right to delay taking the Ace so that it will provide an entry to run the suit.**

<u>North</u>			
S-94			
H-AT542			
D-QT75			
C-T5			
<u>West</u>		<u>East</u>	
S-QJ8		S-A532	
H-Q96		H-J7	
D-A64		D-K92	
C-AK97		C-QJ32	
<u>South</u>			
S-KT76			
H-K83			
D-J83			
C-864			
<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>
Pass	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	2C	Pass	2D
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

After North leads the H-4, South wins the King and returns the eight. If North wins and clears the suit, declarer easily makes 9 tricks after losing the spade finesse. If North lets the H-J win the second trick, partner can lead another heart after he wins the S-K.

When this hand was played at the Monday duplicate on April 19, eight "A" pairs allowed the contract to make!

### **Bridge Tip #8**

**The Rule of Seven - When your right hand opponent preempts and you do not yet know your partner's strength or if he has made a bid that does not reveal his strength, assume that he has seven points.**

In a recent hand with no one vulnerable this was the auction.

<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>
3C	Dbl	Pass	3H
Pass	4H	Dbl	All Pass

North held a flawed 16 HCP which was thus worth about 15. 15 or 16 added to partner's assumed 7 leaves the partnership well short of game values, so North violated the **rule** by bidding 4H. 4H was down three for -500 and a zero. 3H down two not doubled would have been above average. The assumption of 7 points is a median value which will keep you from being too aggressive or too conservative. Partner can have a little more, but as in this case, much less.

### **Bridge Tip #9**

When responder bids one of a major over a minor suit opening, some partnerships have the agreement that opener must have four card support to raise. Others believe that opener should frequently raise with only three trumps, and I hold that view.

If your partnership has the latter agreement, when responder holds only four spades the auction should almost never go

1C 1S

2S 4S

Responder should either bid a new suit or bid 3NT if appropriate. Opener corrects to 4S holding four.

West S-QT64 H-AQ D-K62 C-AJT5

East S-K53 H-KJ97 D-QJ C-Q982

When these hands were played at a recent duplicate game, the auction went as above after East opened 1C. East probably should have rebid 1NT, but West, with only four spades and the red suits stopped, should clearly have bid 3NT over 2S.

### **Bridge Tip #10**

If you open 2NT with a balanced 20-21 HCP, your NT ladder can be:

12-14 HCP - Open one of suit and rebid 1NT

15-17 HCP - Open 1NT

18-19 HCP - Open one of suit and Jump to 2NT

20-21 HCP - Open 2NT

22-23 HCP - Open 2C and rebid 2NT

The sequence:

1 Minor 1 Major

3NT

is not in the ladder, **so it can be used to show a hand with a long minor as a source of tricks, often a singleton (even a void) in responder's suit, and stoppers in the other two suits.**

With:

S-6 H-AQ5 D-AKQT84 C-KT9

Or even S-6 H-Q65 D-AKQT842 C-KT

you would open 1D and rebid 3NT over a spade response. Responder is warned not to correct to 4S unless he has a self-sufficient suit. On the other hand, a 2NT rebid would have shown a balanced hand with 18-19 HCP, and responder could now rebid a 6-card major or use new minor forcing with a five card suit.

### **Bridge Tip #11**

With four Diamonds and four Clubs Audrey Grant says to open the bidding with 1D, presumably so you can rebid 2C without reversing. This is not a very good rule, because you should not want to bid both suits. That bidding should be reserved for hands with nine cards in the minors.

Thus with 4-4 you can open either minor that you want to without affecting your rebid problems. I open the suit that I want partner to lead in case the opponents play the hand.

With:

S-xx H-AJx D-Qxxx C-KQJx

open 1C. If partner bids 1S, rebid 1NT. If he bids 1H, raise to 2H.

With:

S-AJx H-xx D-AQJx C-Jxxx

open 1D. Rebid 1NT over 1H and raise 1S to two.

### **Bridge Tip #12**

This is an exception to the rule of playing third hand high. In the following situation: in defending against a suit contract

North leads S-2

Dummy shows S -864

You as South hold S-KJ95

When North leads a spade as the opening lead against a suit contract, play the Jack. If this forces the Ace, you have located the Queen in partner's hand and partner knows that you may have the King. If it loses to the Queen, you have lost nothing, since partner (hopefully) **never** underleads the Ace.

If you play the King at trick one, you know nothing about the location of the Queen and partner does not know who has the Jack.

Locating as many cards as possible at trick one can often be very important for the defense.