

RAISING PARTNER'S MAJOR SUIT

We suggest that you play Bergen Raises but not in competition (i.e. **not** when opponents are in the act). e.g.

W	N	E	S	
1S	P	3C*		= 7-9 points including distribution (total pts) and 4 card support

or

W	N	E	S	
1H	P	3D*		= 10-12 total pts and 4 card support

* Both these bids are alertable.

W	N	E	S	
1S	P	2S		= 6-9 total pts and 3 card support

or

W	N	E	S	
1H	P	2H		= 6-9 total pts and 3 card support

W	N	E	S	
1S	2C	2S		= 6-9 total pts and 3 or 4 card support

W	N	E	S	
1S	2C	3C		= 10 or more total pts and could be 3 or 4 card Spade support... cannot differentiate.

W	N	E	S
1S	2C	3S	

or

W	N	E	S
1H	P	3H*	

= 2-6 total points and 4 card support (Weak and Alertable)

IF you play **Standard American** (i.e. **NOT** Two Over One), what would you bid with this hand? You are East.

S AQx
 H Kx
 D Jxxx
 C xxxx

W	N	E	S
1S	P	2C	
2H		2S	shows 10-12 and 3 card support

BUT If you play 2/1, here is how the bidding must go. Same hand as above:

W	N	E	S
1S	P	1NT*	
2H	P	3S	

1NT is Forcing and partner announces this.
3S shows 10-12 and **3** card support.

If you had 4 card support, you would have used a Bergen Raise to start with 1S – 3D

LEAD ACE FROM ACE-KING COMBINATION? ALWAYS?

We only lead the ace from AKx(x) against suit contracts at Trick 1. In the middle of a hand, if you have the AKx(x) and decide to lead the suit, then you should actually lead the king. You should also lead the king if you have the KQx(x), but partner will be able to tell by the end of the trick whether you have the ace or the queen.

For example, if your king wins the trick or if the queen is in dummy or in partner's hand, it is obvious that you also have the ace.

The reason for this switch is as follows. You may be on lead partway through the play and want to switch to a suit in which your only honor is the ace. Especially against a trump contract, it would be normal to start this suit by playing the ace. If you do so, partner will know that you do not have the king, since with both the ace and king, you would have led the king.

And now from Larry Cohen...

Once dummy is visible, it is often a viable defensive strategy to cash an ace (without the king). While you wouldn't lead an ace from ♠Axx, you certainly might want to cash it at trick 3. Maybe declarer took a losing trump finesse and you won your ♥K. You looked at the dummy and saw running diamonds. You needed to take tricks. You quite often would need to bang down an ace (without the king). You don't want partner to think that you have the king when you bang down an ace in the middle of the deal.

Why does this matter? Suppose it is your play at trick 5 (against 2♠) in this position:

Vul: Dir:	♠ ♥ Q107 ♦ ♣	
♠ ♥ 653 ♦ ♣		♠ ♥ AKJ2 ♦ ♣
	♠ ♥ 984 ♦ ♣	

Suppose you mistakenly lay down the ♥A (erroneously thinking ace-from-ace-king applies). Now, you try to get partner in (with some other suit) so that he can play another heart.

However, he won't play another heart. He will think that you have only ♥Axx or the like and were cashing the ace (hoping he could encourage if he had the king). You are denying the ♥AK if you lay down the ace. The correct card is the king. Then, when partner gets in, he will know you started with ace-king.

This is just one layout/example of many, but the bottom line is: **Ace-from-ace-king is only at trick one.**

MISFITS by Pieter VanBenekom

My partner Christine and I always try to leave Miss Fit at home when we go to play bridge somewhere, but it's amazing how many times she sneaks into the trunk of the car and comes along anyway. Even worse, sometimes she is accompanied by her cousin, Bad Split, as well, and it's really tough to play a contract with a misfit AND a bad split.

I once remarked to one of the better players at our bridge club that being able to play the misfits better, and thus avoiding disasters, was probably the greatest key to consistently getting better results, and that someone ought to write a book about the subject. There seem to be a myriad of books about just about any part of the game – but none about how to play the misfits.

"If you write it, I'd buy it," said our late colleague, Jay Prilliman.

Despite the promise of at least one sure buyer, I haven't yet been able to publish the book because I can't seem to gather enough material on the subject. How to play the misfits and avoid big disasters basically boils down to one line of advice about how to manage the auction: GET OUT EARLY!

If you keep bidding your suit despite strong signs from your partner that he or she is allergic to it, and your partner does the same, pretty soon you will be too high to make any contract, and trying to escape to No Trump may be more of a desperation move than a real alternative.

Barbara's note: " MISFIT? QUIT!"

HAND EVALUATION by Larry Cohen

It is common knowledge that the traditional system for counting High Card Points (HCP) is flawed. Ace=4, King=3, Queen=2 and Jack=1 overvalues jacks while undervaluing aces and kings.

More accurate is something like:

A=4 1/2

K=3 1/3

Q=2

J=3/4

I don't recommend using those fractions, but it is good to be aware of. All these fractions would give most people a headache. I'd like to propose a simple solution:

When your hand is heavy with aces/kings (as opposed to having lots of jacks), just take a slightly optimistic view if you need to. For example, if you are thinking of going on, do so. After 1-3 (Limit Raise), go to 4 with:

S A10876

H A2

D A432

C 54

but, pass with:

S QJ542

H Q2

D KJ32

C KJ

The 4-3-2-1 system also doesn't account for 10's and 9's.

Some teachers espouse counting 10's as $1/2$ and 9's as $1/4$. Again, I hesitate to make a player calculate fractions.

Regarding 10's, not all of them are useful. The 10 in each layout below is worthless:

10xx opposite Jxx

10x opposite Axx

10xxx opposite xx

In the following layouts, the 10 is potentially useful:

J10x opposite Qxx

Q10x opposite Kxx

A10x opposite J9x

Granted, I chose these examples carefully, but what do you notice? In the first group, the 10 is accompanied by only small cards. In the second batch, the 10 is accompanied by a higher honor.

In general, a 10 with a higher honor is quite valuable. Accordingly I propose the following guideline:

Add $1/2$ point for a 10 if it is accompanied by a higher honor.


True, this is not an exact science. But, I recommend giving it a try to see if your bidding evaluation improves. If you don't like fractions, you can just take the optimistic view with these hands as well.

Bridge Tip by Andrew Robson

Which lead to make?

Against a trump contract the best opening leads are singletons or sequences of two or more touching high cards in a suit (lead the top card). Generally the singleton is a more dynamic choice but when the sequence is ace-king, the latter choice is advisable. Why?

You retain the lead after dummy is revealed and can continue or switch to your singleton as seems fit. If you lead your singleton you are likely to lose the lead and so cannot switch to the ace-king suit.

North Deals	♠ J 8 6	
N-S Vul	♥ 10 8 4	
	♦ A J 3 2	
	♣ A Q 9	
♠ A K 5 4		♠ Q 9 7
♥ A 6 5		♥ 7 3
♦ 4		♦ 10 9 8 5
♣ K 10 8 6 4		♣ J 7 5 2
	♠ 10 3 2	
	♥ K Q J 9 2	
	♦ K Q 7 6	
	♣ 3	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 N	Pass	3 ♥
Pass	4 ♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			

4 ♥ by South

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