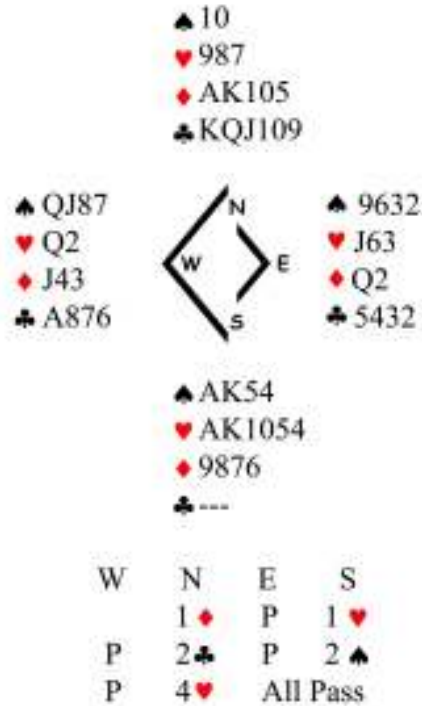


# 152. A Review of Suit Openings

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--East West Vulnerable--

Now it is time to review basic suit openings. It has been seen that a hand full of honour cards will take a lot of tricks depending on transportation and the location of the adverse cards. But how do we judge how many tricks a certain hand is likely to take? We use a system of high card points tempered by experience.

In this system, which is not meant to be completely accurate, one can get to the best contract a good percentage of the time.

An ace is four points, a king is three points, a queen is two points and a jack is one point. Experience will show that touching honours in long suits with good intermediate cards are undervalued by the above scheme and nontouching honours in short suits are overvalued by the above scheme.

The basic rule is simple enough. Count your points and if the total is 12, slightly higher than average for one of four hands, open the bidding in one's longest suit.

In these columns, I use standard American bidding with five-card majors. This means that an opening of one heart or one spade, the major suits, shows a five-card suit or longer.

If one has four or less in a major, one opens the longer minor, diamonds or clubs. If clubs and diamonds are both three in length, one opens a club and if clubs and diamonds are both four in length, one opens a diamond. Because the minor opening can only be three in length, it is not always a good suit for partner to lead.

Each player counts his points and places his hand in one of the following ranges. The opener has the ranges: 12-14: minimum opener; 15-17: one notrump opener if balanced; 16-17: enough for an invitational jump raise; 18-20: strong enough to jump shift; and 21+: strong enough for a two notrump or a two club opener.

The partner of the player who opens the bidding has the following ranges:

0-5: not enough to respond; 6-9: just enough to respond once in a new suit; 10-12: enough to bid a new suit at the two-level; 13-15: enough to get to game; and 16+: enough to sniff for slam.

When one determines the range partner is trying to show, one can place the contract based on the following total points. 24 or less: partscore; 25+: game, either three notrump or four of a major; 28-29+: minor suit game of five of a minor; 33-36: a small slam (6 level) and 37+: a grand slam (7 level).

Now let's look at the above hand.

### **The bidding:**

North opens one diamond and has a two club rebid. When an opener bids a major, it is five in length and the next suit he bids is at least four. The responder will bid four-card suits up the line, but will bid a longer suit first. South bids a heart and has a strong enough hand to bid two spades showing partner he has four spades and five hearts and is forcing to game.

### **The Lead:**

Queen of spades

### **The play:**

Declarer wins the ace of spades and ruffs a spade. He puts the king of clubs on the table for a ruffing finesse. When the ace is not produced, he throws a losing diamond. West wins the ace

and exits a trump. Declarer ruffs another spade and pitches another diamond on the good club, gives up a trump and claims.

**The Result:** Four hearts making +1 for +450

**Notes:**

-All the bridge columns may be viewed at <http://watsongallery.ca>.