Mel's Rules



Bridge Rules

Rule of 23

Rule of 9

Rule of 22

Rule of 17

RULE OF 20

Rule of 8

Rule of 2

How You Can Play Like an Expert

(Without Having to Be One)



Mel's 21st Century Rules and Other Guidelines for Playing Winning Bridge at Your Level and Above

by

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Noted Author and Teacher

Mel's Rule of 2

Partner



Pass

LHO



1NT

RHO



Pass

You



????

The Evaluation Process

When your Left-Hand Opponent (LHO) has opened a strong 15-17 high-card point 1 NT, which is then passed around to you,

enter the auction if you hold at least 2 shortness points (void=3, singleton=2, doubleton=1),

regardless of high-card point strength and vulnerability!

Rationale

- Opener has 15-17 HCP. 16 HCP average
- Responder has 0-8 HCP. 4 HCP average
- Therefore, your side has an average of 20 HCP

From a HCP perspective, your side has just as much right to determine the contract as the opponents do!

The ONLY factor to consider whether or not to bid is distribution, not HCPs!

Rule of 2 Practice Hands
Assume using DONT

Practice Hand A

♠Q842
♥A76
♦5
♣J7532

HCP: 7
Shortness Points: 2
Bid: 2 Clubs

Practice Hand B

♠KJ6
♥A83
♦K76
♣AJ54

HCP: 16
Shortness Points: 0
Bid: Pass

Rule of 2 Review

When your Left-Hand Opponent (LHO) has opened a strong 15-17 high-card point 1 NT, which is then passed around to you,

enter the auction if you hold at least 2 shortness points (void=3, singleton=2, doubleton=1),

regardless of high-card point strength and vulnerability!

Mel's Rule of 8

You



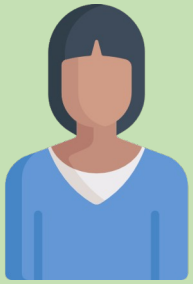
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LHO



1NT

Partner



RHO



The Evaluation Process

Your RHO opens a strong 1NT

1) Add the number of cards in your two longest suits
2) Compute your Loser Trick Count (LTC)
3) Subtract LTC from number of cards in your two longest suits
4) If result is 1 or less, PASS.
5) If 2 or more, and if you have at least 6 HCPs, BID

2 + 6 = 8

Practice Hand C

♠AQ873
♥K63
♦85
♣K95

HCP: 12 (>6)
2 longest suits: 8
LTC: 7
Result: 8 – 7 = 1 (<=2)
Bid: Pass

Practice Hand D

♠K8653
♥K8754
♦85
♣4

HCP: 6 (>=6)
2 longest suits: 10
LTC: 7
Result: 10 – 7 = 3 (>=2)
Bid: 2 Hearts

Rule of 8 Review

Your RHO opens a strong 1NT

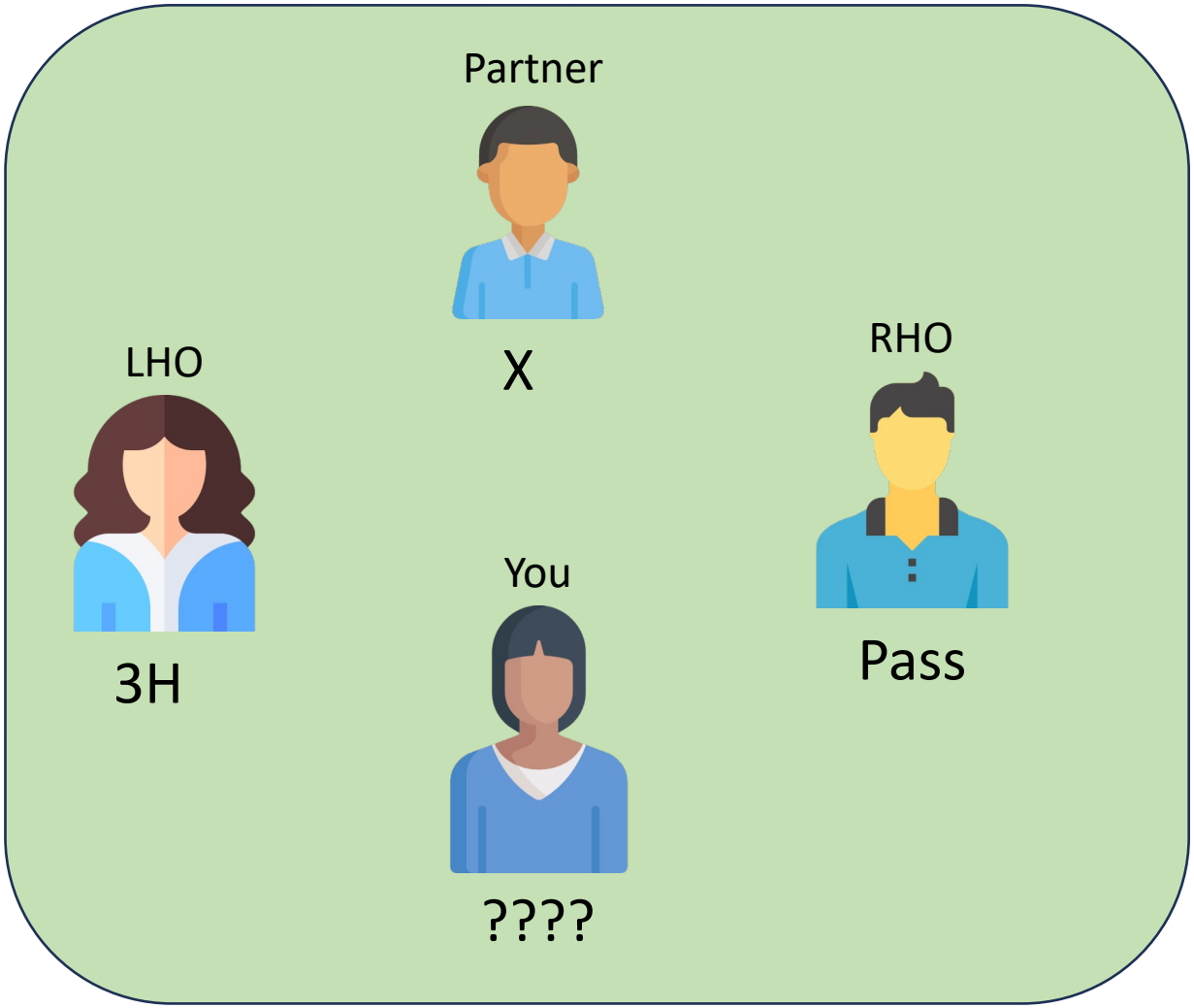
1) Add the number of cards in your two longest suits
2) Compute your Loser Trick Count (LTC)
3) Subtract LTC from number of cards in your two longest suits
4) If result is 1 or less, PASS.
5) If 2 or more, and if you have at least 6 HCPs, BID

2 + 6 = 8

Observation
From the Rules of 8 and 2

You need a distributional hand to overcall a 1NT opener

Mel's Rule of 9



The Evaluation Process

When to convert partner's TO X into a penalty X

1) Add the number of cards you hold in the opponent's suit
2) To the number of honor cards you hold in the opponent's suit (the 10 is an honor)
3) To the level of the contract
4) If result is 9 or more, PASS. Leave the X in
5) If the result is 8 or less, BID

Practice Hand E

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
3♥	X	Pass	??

Your hand

♠76
♥QJ75
♦K863
♣865

cards in Opponents Suit: 4
of honor card in Op Suit: 2
Level of contract: 3
4 + 2 + 3 = 9
Bid: PASS (convert TO X to penalty X)

Practice Hand F

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
3♥	X	Pass	??

Your hand

♠K642
♥J853
♦KQ6
♣65

cards in Opponents Suit: 4
of honor card in Op Suit: 1
Level of contract: 3
4 + 1 + 3 = 8
Bid: 3 Spades

Rule of 9 Review

When to convert partner's TO X into a penalty X

1) Add the number of cards you hold in the opponent's suit
2) To the number of honor cards you hold in the opponent's suit (the 10 is an honor)
3) To the level of the contract
4) If result is 9 or more, PASS. Leave the X in
5) If the result is 8 or less, BID

Mel's Rule of 17

Partner



2H

LHO



RHO



Pass

You



????

The Evaluation Process

When to try for a game level contract after partner opens with a weak 2 bid

1) Add the number of cards you hold in partner's suit
2) To your high card points (HCPs)
3) If result is 17 or more, bid game.
4) Conventional wisdom: have at least 15 HCPs

Practice Hand G

Partner	RHO	You
2♥	X	??

Your hand

♠KJ5

♥5

♦KQ7532

♣AQ7

cards in Partner's Suit: 1

Your HCPs: 15

Result: 16

Bid: PASS

Practice Hand H

Partner	RHO	You
2♥	X	??

Your hand

♠AQ84

♥K8

♦A832

♣QJ6

cards in Partner's Suit: 2

Your HCPs: 16

Result: 18

Bid: Game

Other Weak 2 Responses

When you do not meet the Rule of 17, apply the Law of Total Tricks (LOTT)

1) If you have 3 cards In you partner's suit, extend the preempt by bidding 3 of his/her suit
2) If you have 4 cards In you partner's suit, bid 4 of his/her suit
3) Temper your response with the vulnerability

When you have a huge hand, consider slam

Rule of 17 Review

When to try for a game level contract after partner opens with a weak 2 bid

1) Add the number of cards you hold in partner's suit
2) To your high card points (HCPs)
3) If result is 17 or more, bid game.
4) Conventional wisdom: have at least 15 HCPs

Mel's Rule of 22

Using the 4-3-2-1 HCP evaluation system, we have been taught to

- Open all 13+ point hands.
- Open some 12 point hands.
  - For sure if you have shortness somewhere
  - And you have "good" points (eg not Jx in a suit)

The Rule of 20

What about hands with 10 or 11 HCPs?
Or some 12 HCP hands?

In the early 1980s, the rule of 20 was discovered.
1) Add the number of cards you hold in your 2 longest suits
2) To your high card points (HCPs)
3) If the result is 20 or more, open the bidding.
4) If the result is 19 or less, pass.

The Rule of 20 is Flawed!

Why?

The 4-3-2-1 HCP system is not an entirely accurate portrayal of trick taking capability and timing

- Aces are worth more than 4
- Kings are worth more than 3
- Queens are worth less than 2
- Jacks are worth less than 1

Compensation is needed!

Mel's Rule of 22 is the Rule of 20 Compensated

1) Evaluate your hand using the rule of 20
2) Pass if 19 or less
3) If 20 or more, determine the number of QUICK TRICKS
   1) A = 1 quick trick
   2) KQ = 1 quick trick
   3) AK = 2 quick tricks
4) If Rule of 20 number + Quick Tricks >=22, BID!

20 + 2 = 22

Practice Hand I

♠QJ843
♥Q7
♦9
♣AJ432

HCP: 10
Sum of 2 longest suits: 10
Quick Tricks: 1
Result: 10 + 10 + 1 = 21
Bid: Pass

Another view: Not enough Aces and Kings

Practice Hand J

♠K8432
♥76
♦9
♣AK432

HCP: 10
Sum of 2 longest suits: 10
Quick Tricks: 2
Result: 10 + 10 + 2 = 22
Bid: Open 1S

Rule of 22 Review

1) Evaluate your hand using the rule of 20
2) Pass if 19 or less
3) If 20 or more, determine the number of QUICK TRICKS
   1) A = 1 quick trick
   2) KQ = 1 quick trick
   3) AK = 2 quick tricks
4) If Rule of 20 number + Quick Tricks >=22, BID!

20 + 2 = 22

Final Thoughts

1) Mel's Rules were empirically derived
   - High level experts used them without hearing or knowing about them
2) According to Mel, his rules work 70-80% of the time
   - So they are really guidelines
   - Sure beats leading toward an AQ!
3) His book has a lot more rules
4) None of these rules requires Convention Card updates
   - But they do require memorization!

Challenge: Try them out!