Counting at Bridge

Counting is one of the very important things that you do at bridge. You first learned about counting your points - in order to bid and rebid.

Next you learned to count your tricks, and possible tricks, to see where you could develop tricks, by trumping losers, after the opening bid is made.

Next to be a good bridge player, you must start counting points in opponents hands during the play of the hand. Did an opponent have a chance to open the bidding and they did not? If so, then they have less than opening count.

Did they overcall? This too takes a minimum amount of points; usually opponents will not overcall with less than about 8 points.

Counting Declarer's points and lengths is KEY to good defense. Towards this end, once dummy becomes visible STOP and count how many points PARTNER has. Subtract your HCPs, Dummy's and the points that Declarer has shown from 40. This will give you a good idea of how much partner can contribute to your joint effort.

Dummy: S- Qxx H- K10x D- Kxxx C- Jxx

You: S- KJx H- Qxx D- xxx C- Q10xx

After 1NT:2NT:3NT you ask and determine that 1NT showed 15-17 points. To give you the best chance, assume 16 HCPs in the Declaring hand. By subtracting 16, 9 (Dummy's HCPs) and 8 (your HCPs) from 40 we can infer that partner has SEVEN HCPs. If in doubt regarding inferences about Declarer's HCP total, apply this general rule: Be OPTIMISTIC at Rubber bridge, assume that Declarer is stretching to bid a close contract and accord Declarer the LEAST number of HCPs that would be consistent with their bidding.

More inferences, did the opening leader lead a card, to his partner's ace, and trump the return of that suit? If so, he has 12 cards in the other three suits, and if you and dummy have only 6 cards in the lead suit, then opener's partner has only 7 other cards. If you have to put cards into one hand or the other, in order to know which way to finesse, put them in the long suits hand, the opening leaders hand.

At this point you might read thru the following percentage table: It is NOT important that you memorize this table. It is, however, helpful to remember this general principle: When the opponents have an odd number of cards, they most will most likely divide as evenly as possible; but when the opponents have an even number of cards, they will most likely not divide evenly-except that two cards are a slight favorite to divide 1-1."

PERCENTAGE TABLE FOR SUIT DISTRIBUTION OF OUTSTANDING CARDS

2 cards will divide 1-1 52% 2-0 48%

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3 cards will divide 2-1 78% 3-0 22%

4 cards will divide 2-2 40% 3-1 50% 4-10 10%

5 cards will divide 3-2 68% 4-1 28% 5-0 4%

6 cards will divide 4-2 48% 3-3 36% 5-1 15% 6-0 1%

7 cards will divide 4-3 62% 5-2 31% 6-1 6% 7-0 1%

The percentages are rounded to whole numbers.