

## Bridge "By the Numbers" – Ron Kral

To quote Larry Cohen,

Rules, Schmules. "There are too many "Rules of bridge" out there. I prefer the Rule of Thinking!"

That said, here are some interesting numerical rules that you can apply to your bridge game. **WARNING:** These rules vary in their effectiveness! They are mostly guidelines, **NOT** "rules"... That said....

The rule Of..	
1	When there's just 1 trump out and it's higher than yours, it's almost always best to leave it out. To eliminate their top trump costs you two trumps. <b>Corollary:</b> When you're on lead with the master trump, CASH IT! Get two for one!
2a	Lead the top of a 2-card suit (doubleton)
2b	Missing only 2 cards in a suit including the King, the percentage play is for the drop, not to finesse (but it's very close – 52%-48%).
3	Every card over 8 in your combined trump suit is worth 3 points. That is, with a 9-card fit, you only need 23 HCP to make game in a major. With a 10 card fit, you only need 20 HCP. DOES NOT APPLY TO NO TRUMP!
4a	Bid your 4-card MAJORS "up the line".
4b	After partner opens 1♣, SKIP a 4-card diamond (or longer) ♦ suit to bid a major or NoTrump when you hold 6-11 HCP.
5a	A player bidding 2 suits normally shows at least 5 cards in his first suit.
5b	NEVER (well, VERY rarely) bid 5 over 5! Double instead.
6a	Always respond holding 6 HCP
6b	When someone rebids a suit, they normally hold 6 or more cards. I *always* do!
7a	When they pre-empt and you're deciding on whether or not to bid, assume your partner has 7 HCP. It's amazing how accurate this is. ALSO, when your partner bids over their pre-empt, IF YOU HAVE about 7 HCP, you have exactly what you "promised". DO NOT BID unless you have EXTRAS over 7 HCP.
7b	When declaring no trump, and you hold the Ace of the suit led and nothing else, total up the number of cards you have in the suit between you and dummy and subtract from 7. Hold up that many times. Axx opposite xx = 5 cards. 7-5=2 – Hold up 2 times and win the 3 <sup>rd</sup> . Holding Axx opposite xxx, only hold up once.
8a	When you discover an 8 card major suit fit, don't go looking for another one!
8b	When holding 8 cards in a suit missing the Queen, without any other information, it's better to finesse than to play for the drop (8 EVER). BUT it's VERY close (52%-48%) and knowing almost anything about the opponent's distribution can easily change the odds. (Vacant slot theory)
9a	When holding 9 cards in a suit missing the queen, it's slightly better to play for the drop rather than to finesse (9 NEVER). BUT it's VERY close (52%-48%). Knowing almost anything about the opponent's distribution can easily change the odds. (Vacant slot theory)
9b	Never sell out at the 2-level when you have a 9-card fit in a competitive auction. When you know the partnership holds 9 trump and the points are approximately evenly divided, The "Law of Total Tricks" says your side rates to take 9 tricks.
9c	When you're thinking about passing partner's takeout double, turning it into a penalty double, add together the number of cards you have in the opponents' trump suit, the number of honor cards you hold in that suit, and the level of the auction. If the total is nine or more, pass for penalties; otherwise, bid something.
9d	When partner opens 1NT (15-17), invite ONLY when you hold 9 points. PASS with 8 points, Bid 3NT with 10 points. Count every card in a suit over 4 as 1 point. (EXCEPTION: Vulnerable at teams, invite with 8.),
9e	When partner opens and they overcall 1NT, if you hold 9 HCP, DOUBLE FOR PENALTY

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10a	An "average" bridge hand is 10 High Card Points. 40 points in the deck, divided by 4 hands.
10b	If partner opens 1NT and you hold 10 HCP, you <b>MUST</b> get to game somewhere.
10c	When the lead is 3 <sup>rd</sup> best, subtract the spot card from 10. The answer is how many cards <b>GREATER</b> than that spot reside in the 3 remaining hands (ask about their leading style 4 <sup>th</sup> best or 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> ).
11	When the lead is 4 <sup>th</sup> best, subtract the spot card from 11. The answer is how many cards <b>GREATER</b> than that spot reside in the 3 remaining hands. Use this rule as declarer too (Ask about their leading style. Be sure to find out if they lead 4 <sup>th</sup> best).
12a	When the lead is 5 <sup>th</sup> best, subtract the spot card from 12. The answer is how many cards <b>GREATER</b> than that spot reside in the 3 remaining hands. See Rule of 11 (ask about their leading style 4 <sup>th</sup> best or 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> ).
12b	Open all 12 point hands.
13	Use the rule of 13 when you have a distributional hand with less than 22 points, and you're not sure whether to open one of a suit or 2♣. Add up your defensive tricks (A=1, AK=2, KQ=1, Kx=1/2, QJx=1/2). Multiply the total by 2. Add all length cards of more than 3 in a suit. If the total is 13 or more, open 2♣.
14	When they freely bid to game, assume they have 26 High Card Points. That leaves 14 for the defense (40-26=14). Subtract your HCP from 14 to estimate the number of HCP partner holds.
15	Use the rule of 15 to decide whether or not to open the bidding in the 4 <sup>th</sup> seat after three consecutive passes. Statistically, you will end up with a plus score if the sum of your HCP and the number of spades you hold add up to 15 or more. If the Rule of 15 is not satisfied, do not open the bidding. <b>NOTE: DO NOT</b> apply this to 14 and 15 HCP hands!
16	When responding to a 1NT opening bid, count your HCP and all your cards 8 or higher. Add the two numbers together. If they add up to 16 or more, bid 3NT.
17	When partner opens a weak 2, add your HCP to your number of trumps. If the total is more than 17, look for game. (I'm not a big fan of this rule – it's wrong too often – particularly when responder holds only 1 or 2 trumps.
18	When they stop at the 2-level without a game try, they have a little more than ½ the deck (22 HCP). Subtract your HCP from 18 to estimate the number of HCP your partner holds.
19	If you open with 19 HCP and partner responds, be sure you get to game (see the rule of 6a and rule of 25).
20	When deciding to open the bidding on less than 12 HCP, add your HCP to the lengths in your two longest suits. If the total is 20 or more, open the bidding. <b>Caveat:</b> MOST of your HCP should be in your long suits.
21	It takes about 21 HCP to make 1 NT.
22	Some experts modify the rule of twenty to the rule of 22. That is, a rule-of-20 hands must also have two quick tricks – two Aces, or an AK in the same suit, or an Ace and two outside kings (20+2=22).
23	It takes about 23 HCP to make 2 NT. So, when partner shows a weak No Trump (12-14), <b>DO NOT INVITE GAME</b> unless you hold <b>at least</b> 11 HCP because if partner has a bare 12 HCP, you may get too high.
24	When it goes PASS, PASS, the combined holding of 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> seat have a total of about 24 points
25	It takes 25 HCP to make a game in a major when you have an 8-card fit or game in 3NT without a fit.

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