

Rule of 22

The Rule of 20 suggests bidding with distributional hands which lets us open the bidding more frequently. If we add our high card points to our length points and reach 20 we can open the hand, ie open a hand with 10 HCP plus two five card suits.

Several authors have suggested minor adjustments to this rule, taking defensive tricks into consideration.

The 4-3-2-1 point count system we all use to add up HCP undervalues aces and overvalues queens and jacks, therefore the Rule of 22 is considered a more reliable technique when evaluating the playing strength of a hand. The extra 2 comes from the required number of quick tricks, which are tricks that can be won if you end up defending.

Rule of 20 Adjustments:

Positive features - add 1 point if the hand has:

At least 2 quick tricks

Two tens usefully combined with one or more higher honours in a 3 card or longer suit (eg A J 10 x or Q J 10, A 10 9 x)

Negative features – subtract 1 point if the hand has:

A singleton K, Q, or J

A doubleton KQ, KJ, QJ, Qx or Jx

An unguarded Q or J (eg Qxx or xx)

No aces

Queens and Jacks contributing 50% or more of the HCP

QUICK TRICKS

AK in the same suit = 2

AQ in the same suit = 1 ½

A or KQ in the same suit = 1

K with J or lower value card(s) = ½

therefore, we think of the Rule of 22 as The Rule of 20 +2 with the “2” an additional requirement.

Let's apply the Rule of 22 to some hands:

1 ♠ A Q 9 7 4 ♥ 8 3 ♦ K J 8 7 2 ♣ 5

This hand has 10 HCP plus 10 cards in the two longest suits and also has 2 quick tricks with the AQ and KJ in the same suits so 20 +2 = 22 Open 1 ♠

2 ♠ K Q ♥ J 8 7 5 3 ♦ K J 9 5 2 ♣ 5

Hand 2 meets the Rule of 20 with 10 HCP and 10 cards in two suits but it is lacking in the quick tricks department with only 1.5 (one in spades and .5 in diamonds) Pass this hand

