

Evaluating Your Opening Bid



By Karen Walker

From her website

You should open all hands that have 13 or more high-card points and virtually all hands with 12 hcp. You may choose to open with 11 or a bad 12 points (even 10 points) if your hand and the conditions has a good combination of the following requirements:

1. Your hand has two or more quick tricks.

Quick tricks are strong honor holdings that offer “sure” tricks:

AK = 2 Quick Tricks

AQ = 1 ½ Quick Tricks

Ace or KQ = 1 Quick Trick

King = ½ Quick Trick

Stretch to open any hand with at least 2 ½ quick tricks. Avoid opening “light” hands that have fewer than 2 quick tricks.

♠A1043 ♥1096 ♦AK92 ♣43

> Open 1♦. This is “only” 11 points, but it has three prime quick tricks.

♠Q106 ♥AQ1073 ♦KJ76 ♣4

> Open 1♥. Just two quick tricks, but good playing strength.

♠QJ6 ♥K72 ♦Q43 ♣A753

> Pass. This is a “soft” hand with only 1 ½ quick tricks (Ace=1, K=1/2).

2. You have good suit quality.

Your honors and high “spot” cards are in your long suits rather than your short suits.

♠AQJ103 ♥86 ♦A1042 ♣32

> Open 1♠.

♠J7643 ♥KQ ♦A2 ♣Q643

> Pass.

3. You’ll have an easy, descriptive rebid.

These are usually hands that have a 6+-card suit or length in two suits.

♠10 ♥KQJ85 ♦765 ♣AJ103

> Open 1♥. You plan to rebid 2♣ if partner doesn’t raise hearts.

♠AJ5 ♥3 ♦KQJ1085 ♣6

> Open 1♦. You plan to rebid 2♦ over any response from partner.

4. You have length and strength in the majors.

This gives you an easy rebid and makes it more likely that you’ll play in a trump contract instead of notrump.

♠K1072 ♥AJ93 ♦4 ♣K954

> Open 1♣. If partner responds 1♦, you can bid 1♥. If he instead responds 1♥ or 1♠, you’ll raise to 2 of his suit.

♠4 ♥K43 ♦AJ93 ♣K9543

> Pass. You’ll have an awkward rebid if partner responds 1♠.

5. You're vulnerable.

It may be safer to open a vulnerable 1-bid than to overcall later, especially if you have a fairly weak suit.

♠7 ♥K98754 ♦A102 ♣KJ3

> Open 1♥. You'd hate to have to overcall 2♥ if your opponent opens 1♠.

♠-- ♥KJ10543 ♦A102 ♣J643

> Pass. This hand is too weak for a 1-bid and too strong for a 3-bid. You can describe it better by overcalling later.

A rule to remember:

If you decide your hand is worth an opening bid, stay with the courage of your conviction. Don't "lie" later just to make up for your thin high-card points. Treat your hand as a "real" opener, especially if you find a trump fit.

If you're in third seat (partner has passed):

- Be more willing to open light. You should stretch to open a hand of just 10-11 points if:
- You have a strong suit – one you want partner to lead if you defend.

♠KQ1093 ♥J4 ♦A75 ♣983

> Open 1♠. You can safely pass any suit partner responds.

♠KJ3 ♥10876 ♦J104 ♣AQ8

> Open 1♣ and pass partner's response.