

Hamilton Bridge Centre

Rule Of 20

Opening in first or second seat.



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Everyone knows you should open the bidding with 13 points or more. Many believe you should open with 12 points or more. But what about hands with fewer points, but with one or two long suits? Should you open at the one level, preempt, or pass? This article will provide some tips.

The first thing to keep in mind that the term “points” in this article refers to high card points only. Do not count points for shortness when you open (the old rule about counting for voids, singletons, or doubletons when deciding to open is **wrong**)—see the article on [Counting For Short Suits](#) for more details. Only consider shortness after your partner (or your opponents) have bid. What does count in opening the bidding is length.

The following tips apply only when opening in first or second seat (ie, your partner has not yet had a chance to bid).

1. Open any hand with 13 points or more, except with 4-4-4-1 distribution. Open any 12 point hand, except with 4-3-3-3 or 4-4-4-1 distributions. Only open a hand with 4-4-4-1 distribution if you have 14 points or more.
2. With weaker hands, add the length in your two longest suits to your high card points. If the total is 20 or more, then make a normal opening bid at the one level. If the total is less than 20, either preempt or pass. Here are some examples:

Example 1

♠ K Q 10 8 7
♥ A J 9 5 4
♦ 8
♣ 7 3

This hand has 10 high card points, plus 10 for the length of the two longest suits. Make a normal opening bid (1♠). Over your partner's response, rebid 2♥ (unless your partner supports spades). Unless your partner makes a forcing bid over 2♥, don't bid any more. (If partner bids diamonds or clubs twice, pass without panic. Your hand isn't good enough to try a rescue).

Example 2

♠ 10 3
♥ A K J 9 7 5 4
♦ K 8 7
♣ 3

This hand has 11 high card points, plus 10 for the length of the two longest suits. Make a normal opening bid (1♥). Over your partner's response, rebid 2♥ (if your partner responds 2♥, then pass). Again, don't bid any more unless your partner makes another forcing bid. Don't make the mistake of preempting with this hand; it's too good.

Example 3

♠ 7
♥ 10 4
♦ A Q J 9 8 7 4
♣ 9 5 2

This hand has 7 high card points, plus 10 for the length of the two longest suits. This isn't enough to open 1♦. The diamond suit is certainly good enough to preempt 3♦ if you don't mind an occasional bad score (and if your partner has a sense of humour); otherwise, passing is ok (but wimpy).

Example 4

♠ K 8 7
♥ A 10 6 4 3
♦ Q J 8 6
♣ 8

This hand has 10 high card points, plus 9 for the length of the two longest suits. This isn't enough to open 1♥. Pass this one and show interest if your partner opens anything other than 1♣, or if the opponents bid clubs.