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Why can't we count a void as 5 points?

Too many players believe that dummy's void is always a juicy five-point asset. Sorry, that's not correct.

The hands below illustrate why dummy's number of trumps does matter. Each of these very similar hands has the same high cards and distribution in the red suits. The only differences are the number of trumps and clubs.

1. ♠987 ♥AKQJ ♦— ♣987543
2. ♠9872 ♥AKQJ ♦— ♣98754
3. ♠98762 ♥AKQJ ♦— ♣9875

Here is declarer's hand:

♠AKQJ10 ♥875 ♦QJ842 ♣—

The contract is 6♠. Unfortunately, the diamond honors are probably worthless. Even worse, the opening lead is a trump. What are your chances?

1. Less than 1%! You would need the ♦AK to be doubleton — plus more. Don't hold your breath.
2. Much better. If spades are 2-2 (less than 50%), you can cross-ruff diamonds and clubs and still be able to draw trumps and run hearts. Possibilities in diamonds are also a little better.

3. 100%. Even 3-0 trumps are no problem.

The bottom line is that the number of trumps does matter. When you have a fit, the value of dummy's void is equal to his number of trumps. Reminder: Declarer's void is always worth 4 points.

Dummy's short-suit points

When you raise partner's majors, here is the correct way to add points.

Doubleton = 1 point for each one.

Singleton = 2 points, but 3 points with 4+ trumps.

Void = number of trumps in dummy's hand. Dummy should *not* count 5 points for a void unless he has 5 trumps.

After partner opens 1♥, how many short-suit points do you have?

- A. ♠76543 ♥AQ6 ♦— ♣AK543
- B. ♠76 ♥AQ62 ♦7 ♣AK5432
- C. ♠7654 ♥AQ62 ♦— ♣AK543
- D. ♠76 ♥AQ62 ♦75 ♣AK543

Answers:

- A. 3 points. With three trumps, the void = 3
- B. 4 points. Singleton = 3, doubleton = 1
- C. 4 points. With four trumps, the void = 4
- D. 2 points. One point for each doubleton

Re-evaluating by dummy after a fit

Once you've added up your short-suit points, the rest is easy. Dummy points = high-card points plus short-suit points. Consider this auction:

You	Partner
1♣	1♥
?	

Better Bridge with Bergen

You hold:

1. ♠K2 ♥AQJ8 ♦972 ♣K973.

This hand has 13 HCP. Using Adjust-3 (see Bridge Bulletin, Oct. 2008), you make no adjustment (one upgrade, two downgrades). For quality suit, add 1 point for the lovely heart suit. For length points, add none. You have 14 starting points (13 +1 =14). Now evaluate short suits. Add 1 point for the doubleton to give you a total of 15 dummy points. Raise to 2♥.

2. ♠Q943 ♥AK64 ♦— ♣AK764

You have 16 HCP. Evaluating using Adjust-3, you make no adjustment. For length points, add 1 point (five-card club suit) to give you 17 starting points. To evaluate for short suits, add 4 points (void with 4 trumps), and this makes a total of 21 dummy points. Bid 4♦ (splinter bid). If not playing splinters, bid 4♥. □

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