



Marty Bergen
 Mbergen@mindspring.com

The true value of honor cards — part 1

The traditional 4-3-2-1 point count is not totally accurate. It does get an A+ for ease of use, but only a B- for accuracy. Although kings are evaluated correctly, traditional point-count underrates aces and 10s, but overrates queens and jacks.

Bridge theorists, after years of study and with the help of computers, have devised a more accurate scale.

| Honor | Traditional | Computer |
|-------|-------------|----------|
| Ace | 4 | 4½ |
| King | 3 | 3 |
| Queen | 2 | 1½ |
| Jack | 1 | ¾ |
| 10 | 0 | ¼ |

Do I suggest that you memorize the numbers in the right-hand column, and begin using fractions based on what the "computer sez"? Of course not. Do not despair. No one is suggesting that you need to find an entirely new method to count your points. Instead, I'm going to propose something that is accurate, but not difficult.

Adjusting with 3

The following method for evaluating your HCP is very user-friendly,

Better Bridge with Bergen

and is what I'm going to rely on in all my slam-bidding books. I guarantee that this will help you evaluate your hand more accurately and will result in better bidding than before.

Because the key number is three, I call this "Adjust-3." Don't be concerned about the "six steps." Most are trivial. I am just being thorough.

Step 1: Count your HCP in the traditional way.

Step 2: Underrated honors: How many aces and 10s?

Step 3: Overrated honors: How many queens and jacks?

Step 4: Subtract the smaller number from the larger.

Step 5: Consider the result of the subtraction:

- ❖ If fewer than 3, no adjustment.
- ❖ If 3-5, adjust by 1 point.
- ❖ If difference is 6 or more (rare), adjust by 2 points.

Step 6: If you have more underrated honors, add; if you have more overrated honors, subtract.

That sounds more complicated than it really is. Let's look at an example:

♠Q104 ♥KJ63 ♦KQJ4 ♣AQ.

Using Adjust-3, how many HCP do you really have?

Step 1: Count your traditional HCP. You have 18.

Step 2: Underrated honors = 2 (one ace and one 10).

Step 3: Overrated honors = 5 (three queens and 2 jacks).

Step 4: 5 (overrated honors) - 2 (underrated) = 3

Step 5: With a difference of 3, you must *adjust* by 1 point

Step 6: You have more overrated honors, so *subtract* 1 point.

A difference of 1 HCP may not seem like much, but evaluating this

trumps. Even if they are 3-1, you have enough...
 overrated hand as 17 HCP is definitely more accurate than the traditional 18. For those who can't stand the thought of not counting *all* your HCP, the computer-sez point count for this collection is 16¾.

Is the Adjust-3 the perfect technique for counting HCP? Absolutely not! It is intentionally easier than applying all the details that the computer sez. Instead, Adjust-3 is my suggestion of an easy method to help players take a first step in determining what their hand is really worth.

The concept of upgrading or downgrading hands is critical to proper hand evaluation. Every player must be willing to upgrade or downgrade his hand when appropriate. The evaluation process should begin once your cards are sorted, and continues throughout the bidding.

Here's another example:

♠K83 ♥A976 ♦A553 ♣A!

What is the point count using Adjust-3?

You have 15 HCP (traditional). There are three underrated aces, and there are no overrated honors. So, you have 3 - 0 = 3. There are more underrated honors, so add 1 HCP. The Adjust-3 total for this hand is 16 HCP.

Next month in Part 2, we will look at some more examples of Adjust-3 and some shortcuts.

My next cruise departs Nov 16. The ship is totally first-class. Cruise bonuses include a free drawing to play bridge with Mel + five private lessons with him! Singles welcome. We work hard to get you up long before cruise Caribbean ports include Mexico Bahamas, and Calcas islands. For more info, call 800-367-99