

COMPETITIVE BIDDING TOOLS FOR TOUGH DECISIONS

- 1. Remember the Law of Total Tricks.** In competitive situations, each side is likely to take the number of tricks as they have trumps. So, with 8-card fit, stay at 2 level. With 9-card fit, take push to 3 level. (Note: the law works only about 65% of the time. Works best if you have some shortness along with 9 trumps at 3 level.)
- 2. Pay attention to the vulnerability.** You are willing to be down one, doubled, when non-vulnerable. You cannot afford to be doubled, down one, vulnerable, if the opponents are only making a part score their way.
- 3. Stretch to overcall with a good suit.** Opening leads lose more tricks than anything else on defense. When you really have only ONE suit you want partner to lead, stretch to overcall that suit (even a good 4-card suit at the one level, e.g., KQJx).
- 4. You promise a good hand when bidding over a preempt in the direct seat.** (Do not preempt a preempt.) This is a good opening hand over a Weak Two opening and around a strong no trump opening to act over a 3-level preempt (in direct seat). [The more extreme your distribution, the more you can shade your HCP.] The balancing seat can act with a King less. **That means balancer is acting with 10-11 HCP with good shape.**
- 5. You cannot always win against preempts.** Mike Lawrence's rule is that someone overcalling a preempt can expect 7-9 random points in their partner's hand. So, if your partner overcalls a preempt and you have 7-9 random points (without a great fit or great distribution), it is often right to pass. Partner is already "bidding" what you have.
- 6. Consider learning Maximal Competitive Doubles** to distinguish between purely competitive bids and game tries when their suit is the suit directly below your suit. Otherwise, **bids of your suit in competition are purely competitive. To make a game try, you must bid a different suit.**
- 7. Do NOT hang your partner for balancing.**
- 8. Do NOT bid the same values twice.** (For example, the preemptor is not allowed to bid again even if partner raises his/her suit just because you don't want to defend.)
- 9. Learn the principles of the forcing pass** for high-level competition.
- 10. Bid where you live.** If partner open a club, RHO overcalls 1S and you have KQJx 8xxx Kx xxx, bid 1NT rather than making a negative double. Let partner know you have spade values. If you negative double and partner has a singleton spade with 4 good hearts, s/he will be very disappointed when you end up too high in hearts.
- 11. Become a demon doubler.** Sometimes you have to make a penalty double to make sure that partner does not bid on competitively. You must protect partner when you have a trump stack. Double! When the high card points are divided roughly $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ between the two sides, you are willing to make a penalty double with 4 trumps and 2 truck tricks at the 2 level and 3 trumps and 1 trump trick at the 3 level. This can include converting negative, responsive, and support doubles into penalty doubles by passing.
- 12. Bid one more against opponents who never double.** (This is why you must become a demon doubler yourself!)
- 13. In Swiss Teams, with wild distribution, bid one more** when you are not certain who is making what.
- 14. If you know you and your partner defend well, sometimes you have to make a risky double at matchpoints to "protect" your part score.** If, for example, you have bid to 3H, fulling expecting to make it, and the opponents push to 3S, you probably need to double 3S (unless you know wild distribution is going on). You expected +140, so you need to get at least +100 or +200 (or sometimes +300) to make up for the part score you are losing.