

## Use Rule the of 22

On a normal type of hand, you may need to use the *Rule of 22* to decide whether the hand is good enough for an opening bid.

What do you count in looking for this magical figure of 22? You count your points in high cards, the length of your two longest suits and your quick tricks. You then add these together. One name for this method is the HLQT count, where H stands for high cards, L for length and QT for quick tricks.

*The scale for quick tricks is as follows:*

*2 quick tricks: A-K in a suit.*

*1.5 quick tricks: A-Q in a suit.*

*1 quick trick: A or K-Q in a suit.*

*0.5 quick tricks: K in a suit.*

*Quick tricks, by their nature, tend to be of use whatever the trump suit is.*

Hand A

♠ KJ9432

♥ QJ542

♦ -

♣ Q5

Hand B

♠ AJ9432

♥ A9542

♦ -

♣ 95

What is the HLQT for hand A? It comes to 20.5. This is 9 points in high cards, 11 cards in the two longest suits and 0.5 quick tricks. What is the HLQT for hand B? It is 22: 9 in high cards, 11 cards in the longest suits and 2 quick tricks.

The HLQT counts tell you that hand B is a clear-cut opening even if you are vulnerable, while hand A falls short of the requirement.

Ron Klinger, who is as synonymous with HLQT as Harrison-Gray is with the losing trick count, suggests a slight relaxation when non-vulnerable. If you have a suitable opening bid and rebid, you can then open with an HLQT of 21.5 or even 21. You can open a fraction lighter because partner is less likely to press for game and, if you go down, you do so at 50 a time.

Hand C

♠ KQJ94

♥ 965

♦ AT52

♣ 5

Hand D

♠ J964

♥ KT852

♦ AQ

♣ 95

Both C and D have an HLQT of 21: 10 points in high cards, 9 cards in the two longest suits and two quick tricks. With C, feel free to open I non-vulnerable. You have an easy rebid of 2♦ over 2♣ or you can raise a response of 2♦ or 2♥. Moreover, if the deal belongs to the opponents, you are happy with a spade lead. A shaded opening has far less to commend it on hand D. For one thing, you are quite likely to have to rebid your moderate five-card suit. For another, the

hand simply has less playing strength. Hand C has seven losers (one spade, three hearts, two diamonds and one club) while D has seven and a half losers (three spades, two hearts, two clubs and a half in diamonds).

Yes, counting quick tricks takes a tiny bit of extra mental effort. It is a case of the more you put in the more you get out. The more angles from which you view your hand, the better the chance you will assess it accurately. For close opening bids, follow the *Rule of 22*.