

Bridge on Sundays

Bidding – Rule of 15

Opening fourth in hand poses no special problems or does it?

You would open 1NT with 12-14 as usual but what happens if you hold a minimal hand? The rule of 20 gives guidance on whether the hand is suitable to open a suit at the one level but does not take into account that the opposition might bid.

The guidance rule of 15 is used when you are deciding whether to open 1 of a suit, after three passes.

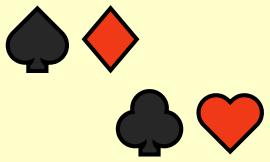
The rule states that you should add together the number of points + the length in spades. If the result is 15 or more, open the hand. This is on the basis that you are often overcalled with spades at the 1 level and may surrender the contract.

Of course, if you hold a strong hand you will open as normal. The rule of 15 gives guidance for weak hands in the fourth position

Examples.

Fourth in hand you hold:

- ♠95 ♥K8 ♦AQ763 ♣QJ62. 12 high card points but only two spades. Pass. You would open 1♦ in the first three positions. Partner is likely to hold around 9 points but an overcall of 1♠ may give the opponents a contract.
- ♠K53 ♥8 ♦AQ763 ♣QJ62. 12 high card points but now you are less concerned by a spade overcall, so open 1♦
- ♠953 ♥8 ♦AKQ76 ♣QJ62. Again, the rule of 15 suggests opening 1♦



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