

MINI UNIT 02 Shortage Points ♠♥♦♣

Shortage points (courtesy of D Browne)

It is so important to assess hand strength accurately: it is primarily so that you know whether to bid for game with its lure of a huge bonus, or else to stop as low as possible.

The main measure of strength is High Card Points (HCP). However, it is time now to learn another important part of hand valuation, **Shortage Points**. Firstly, some terminology. What shortages exist in this hand?

♠AKQJ765432

♥—

♦5

♣83

In hearts you have a void (a completely missing suit). In diamonds you have a singleton (just one card). In clubs you have a doubleton (two cards).

Once you know there is a trump fit, add on shortage points:

Shortage Points (SP)

Void = 5

Singleton = 3

Doubleton = 1

A void is the most valuable shortage: having no cards in the suit means you can trump when it is led (assuming some other suit is trumps). With a singleton, you will have to follow the first time but can trump after that. With a doubleton, after following suit twice you will have no cards of that suit left so can trump if the suit is led again after that.

Shortage Points come with an important caveat – count them only after finding a fit (eight trumps between the two hands). Add your HCP + your SP (if you have found a fit) to get your Total Points (TP).

Example 1 Partner opens 1♠. How many TP is your hand worth?

PARTNER	YOU	YOUR HAND
1♠	?	♠8
		♥7654
		♦Q532
		♣J765

You have 3 HCP. Always count the High Card Points, but only count shortage points after having found a fit. That is the catch here: although you have a singleton, you should not count extra for it because you have not found a trump fit. Partner might have lots of spades and no interest in anything else, in which case your singleton spade will be a liability, not an asset! You have no shortage points, just your 3 HCP. You should pass.

Example 2 What if partner had opened 1♥, instead of 1♠?

PARTNER	YOU	YOUR HAND
1♥	?	♠8
		♥7654
		♦Q532
		♣J765

You still have 3 HCP, but this time you can count for shortage too, because you have found a trump fit (hearts). The singleton (in spades) is worth 3 points. You have 3 HCP + 3 SP = 6 TP. That is enough to respond, so show your heart fit by raising partner's bid of hearts to 2♥.

Example 3

YOUR HAND	YOU	PARTNER
♠AKQ2	1♦	1♥
♥AK75 ?		
♦T987		
♣7		

Your hand has 16 HCP. Now that you have found an 8-card heart fit, add on Shortage Points; the singleton is worth 3 SP. Your hand revalues to 19 TP, and you know partner has at least 6 points to respond, so there are at least 25 points between the two hands – enough to go for game. Bid 4♥.

Quizzes ♠♥♦♣

Questions

1. Your partner opens 1♠. How many points is each of these responding hands worth? What call would you make on each?

(a)	♠J743	(b)	♠J875	(c)	♠5	(d)	♠J865	(e)	♠KT65
	♥6		♥32		♥J765		♥T3		♥A6
	♦K8		♦KJ43		♦K765		♦Q986		♦KT63
	♣KQ6432		♣T73		♣{9732		♣863		♣632

2. Your partner opens 1♣. How should you respond?

(a)	♠43	(b)	♠AK3	(c)	♠KT3	(d)	♠J5	(e)	♠65
	♥Q973		♥32		♥K42		♥T42		♥96
	♦T98		♦532		♦AQ		♦986		♦T863
	♣KQ64		♣T7632		♣K9732		♣AKQJ3		♣KQT97

Answers

- (a) 9 HCP + 4 SP = 13 TP. You have game points – bid 4♠.

(b) 5 HCP + 1 SP = 6 TP. Bid 2♠, the minimum raise.

(c) You have 4 HCP and nothing more – there is no known fit so don't count for the singleton. You lack responding points so pass.

(d) Pass. The fit is there but, sadly, you are unable to show it because even after adding a point for the doubleton, your hand values at only 4 TP.

(e) 3♠. Responder's jump raise shows a fit and 11-12 TP.
- (a) 1♠. Prefer to look for a major fit before raising a minor and anyway, you can't be sure of a club fit because the minor opening could be just three cards.

(b) 2♣. You have no 4-card major to bid so just show the fit. The simple raise promises 6-10 points.

(c) 3NT. You could try 5♣ instead but game in a minor takes you to a dangerously high level. Besides, notrumps is appealing with this all-round strong hand.

(d) 3♣, inviting game.

(e) 2♣. Only 5 HCP but with distribution, this hand is strong enough for a response.

SET BOARDS

<p>Board 10 East Deals Both Vul</p> <p>♠ 6 3 ♥ K J 7 5 2 ♦ Q 8 ♣ J 10 9 5</p>	<p>♠ Q J 10 ♥ 10 8 ♦ 10 9 6 5 ♣ A Q 6 3</p> <p>♠ A 9 8 5 ♥ Q 6 ♦ 4 2 ♣ K 8 7 4 2</p>	<p>♠ K 7 4 2 ♥ A 9 4 3 ♦ A K J 7 3 ♣ —</p>	<p>Theme: Return partner's suit, high from short side The bidding: West's 1♥ response shows 6+pts & 4+ ♥s. With a fit East adds up the points, & don't forget to count 5 SP for the void, now that the fit is known. East has 20 TP & knows West's 6+ gives the partnership game. Lead: ♠Q, top of the sequence The play: If dummy's ♠K is played on North's ♠Q lead, South wins the ♠A & returns a spade, partner's led suit. Declarer is able to ruff the third round & then draws trumps in two rounds. Next it is usually best for declarer to play a long suit, in this case ♦s. Lead the ♦Q (high from the shorter holding) then a ♦ to dummy's ♦A-K-J. By that time the opponents will have no more ♦s so even the small one is a winner.</p>
<p>West 1 ♥ Lead: ♠ Q</p>	<p>North Pass</p>	<p>East 1 ♦ 4 ♥</p>	<p>South Pass All pass</p>
<p>(Courtesy of D Browne)</p>			
<p>Board 11 South Deals None Vul</p> <p>♠ Q 10 3 ♥ 10 9 5 ♦ Q 10 5 4 ♣ K Q 3</p>	<p>♠ A K 8 4 2 ♥ A 8 2 ♦ A 9 3 ♣ A 2</p> <p>♠ 9 7 6 5 ♥ K Q J 3 ♦ 8 2 ♣ J 7 5</p>	<p>♠ J ♥ 7 6 4 ♦ K J 7 6 ♣ 10 9 8 6 4</p>	<p>Theme: Bidding game, high from short side The bidding: South's raise shows shows 6-10 TP responding points & 3+ ♠s so North, with 20 TP, has enough to bid to game. Lead: ♠10. 10-9-8 is a leadable sequence. The play: Upon winning the club lead, declarer draws two rounds of trumps, leaving the ♠Q out, then plays on ♥s. Start with the ♥A (high from the shorter holding) then lead a low ♥ over to dummy (the longer holding). Now the lead is in the right spot to run the ♥ winners. The last ♥ may get ruffed, but that matters not – West's trump is a winner anyway, and declarer gets to discard the club loser. Declarer can later ruff a ♦ in dummy. By playing the cards just right, 11 tricks can be made.</p>
<p>West Pass Pass Lead: ♣ 10</p>	<p>North 1 ♠ 4 ♠</p>	<p>East Pass All pass</p>	<p>South Pass 2 ♠</p>
<p>(Courtesy of D Browne)</p>			