

## 10. Being a slave to the Rule of 20

You should open the bidding with 12 or more points. You can open the bidding with slightly fewer than 12 points if you have a shapely hand and a useful guideline here is the Rule of 20 — open the bidding when the number of cards in your two longest suits added to your total point-count reaches 20 or more.

The Rule of 20 is not really a “Rule”. It’s a guideline. If you have honours in your short suits, no intermediate cards, and your suit lengths will make rebidding tricky, feel free to exercise your judgement and pass. Take these hands.

♠ QJ	♠ Q	♠ K4
♥ J742	♥ K32	♥ Q742
♦ K8432	♦ KJ32	♦ KQ
♣ KJ	♣ Q6532	♣ J8432

All three are clear passes: aceless piles of rubbish. Just imagine, what will you rebid in each case if partner responds 1♠?

### What Happened

West led the ♠10 v 2♣, East winning ♠Q and at trick two cashing ♥A, West giving an encouraging signal by playing ♥8. East continued with ♥7, West winning ♥K and returning a third heart. East ruffed (with ♣5) and now cashed ♠A and led a third spade. South threw his ♥Q as West ruffed. West now led his fourth heart and East ruffed (with ♣8). Declarer overruffed with ♣K and now all of West’s ♣AQJ10 had to score.

Declarer garnered only three tricks — down five and, to rub salt into the wound, West claimed 100 honours (this was rubber bridge, where holding four of the top five

Dealer: South, Vulnerability: Both

♠ K8532		♠ AQ74
♥ J53		♥ A7
♦ AJ102		♦ 86543
♣ 3		♣ 85
♠ 109		♠ J6
♥ K1082		♥ Q964
♦ 97		♦ KQ
♣ AQJ109		♣ K7642

### What Happened

S	W	N	E
1♣(1)	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣(2)	End		

(1) Ouch — just because the hand satisfies the Rule of 20 doesn’t mean you must open it. This is an aceless, intermediate-free collection with no rebid over 1♠.

(2) South may like to pass, but partner’s 1♠ response is unlimited — one hundred per cent forcing.

Contract: 2♣, Opening Lead: ♠10

### What Should Have Happened

S	W	N	E
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) This auction (or lack of) reminds me of a story concerning the late Boris Schapiro, occasionally somewhat irascible. On the board in question, he had conceded 4♠ at his table and, scoring up with teammates, he was told of the absence of any bidding. “Passed out!”, he exclaimed. “What was the auction?”

Contract: Passed out, Opening Lead: -

honours in trumps gains you an extra 100 points). East-West therefore earned 600 points.

### What Should Have Happened

Nothing. Rien du tout. Next.

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