

OPENING IN 3RD and 4TH POSITIONS by Maritha Pottenger

Because partner could pass with 10 or 11 points in 1st or 2nd position, it is often advisable for you to open a little light (on high cards) in 3rd and 4th positions. Here are some general Easybridge guidelines.

In 3rd Position

- 1) **Open with 10 HCP if you can pass any response.** (If you do open a sub-minimum hand, do not bid again unless your partner forces you to do so!) For example, Qxxx Q9xx KQJ xx: Open 1D and pass 1H, 1S and 1NT.
- 2) **You may open a good four-card major.** (It is important to open a suit that you are willing to have partner lead.) For example, with AQJx or KQJx or AKxx, open the 4-card major.
- 3) **Preempt more freely in this position.** Partner has already passed, so should not expect a “disciplined” weak two or three bid now. Be willing to take liberties. You might, for example, make a weak two on a good 5-card suit, e.g., KQJ109
- 4) **Do NOT open your 10 count hand when you do not have a good lead to suggest, do not own the majors, and cannot stand to hear partner bid either major.** Pass. An example would be scattered honors and few cards in hearts and spades, such as Jx Kx Q9xx KJxxx.

In 4th Position

Use the Rule of 15 (also called Pearson Points or Casino Count).

Open if your number of spades plus number of High Card Points equals 15 or more.

1. **A five-card spade suit and 10 HCP should definitely be opened.** You own the “boss suit” and have a good chance of buying the contract at one or two spades for a probable plus score (as opposed to zero if the hand is passed out).
2. **Open a good four-card major.** (Again, it is important to open a suit that you are willing to have partner lead. In part-score defense, the opening lead may make the difference between setting the opponents and letting them make their contract. Tell your partner what the best lead is.)
3. **If you must open a minor suit, open your stronger minor** (again, for the lead) when you are 3-3 in the minors. For example, prefer to open one diamond (rather than one club) with KQx in diamonds and J10x in clubs.
4. **If you preempt in 4th position, standard bidding is that you have an intermediate hand:** 11-15 HCP (for a Weak Two in a major). A 3-level preempt shows a good 7-card suit, intermediate hand, and invites 3NT. Discuss this with partner! (The reasoning is that you may go minus if you preempt with a weak hand in 4th seat and passing it out would be better than a minus score.)

Additional Complication—to consider for the future

If you do decide to adopt these Easybridge guidelines, eventually you might want to also adopt a system for avoiding a direct limit raise. (That is, if partner—in 1st or 2nd chair—has a good 10 to a horrible 12 and support for you, usually partner would raise you to 3. That may be too much if you have opened light.) Some people use a variation of a system called “Drury” to check whether partner has opened light. The simplest approach is that if partner opens a major in 3rd or 4th seat and you have a limit raise, you bid 2C (which is artificial) telling partner that you have a limit raise. If partner has opened a sub-minimum hand, s/he can now simply rebid the major at the 2 level and not have to worry about perhaps going down playing at the 3 level.