

Counting Like the Experts

By World Champion & Master Teacher Donna Compton

Thinking in Patterns is the Key to Counting Like an Expert!

Hand Patterns and Suit Patterns are one in the same. The key to counting bridge hands is **THINKING** in terms of hand patterns and suit patterns.

Of the 39 possible distributions, 14 patterns make up 96% of the patterns you will experience at the bridge table.

Start by working with the top 5 patterns...which you will see 71% of the time.

Then extend your patterns to the top 8 patterns and you will know 85% of the patterns.

You can either make flash cards or use the tips found in the Mental Counting Exercises Handout.

Memorize the common patterns of the 13 cards in a suit and 13 cards in a hand.

Use the common hand patterns listed to the left. Know those patterns like the back of your hand.

Concentrate on how the unseen cards divide.

Think odds. Think divide.

- When there is an odd number of cards missing, then the cards break as evenly as possible.
- When there is an even number of cards missing, then the cards break slightly uneven.

Memorize the original

layout. Whether you're declaring or defending, commit to memory the shape of the dummy and your own hand.

Mentally review the bidding.

Come up with a picture of each player's general hand pattern and high-card strength based on what you hear and do not hear from the bidding

Focus your count on just one unseen hand. There are only two unseen hands during the play. Pick the one you know the most about and figure out that hand's distribution.

- Long Suit in Auction
- Most bidding
- Opening Lead

Use what you know about that hand to figure the distribution of the other hidden hand.

Hand & Suit Patterns	Frequency of Patterns
4-4-3-2	21.55%
5-3-3-2	15.52%
5-4-3-1	12.93%
5-4-2-2	10.58%
4-3-3-3	10.53%
6-3-2-2	5.64%
6-4-2-1	4.70%
6-3-3-1	3.45%
5-5-2-1	3.17%
4-4-4-1	2.99%
7-3-2-1	1.88%
6-4-3-0	1.33%
5-4-4-0	1.24%
5-5-3-0	0.90%