

Counting Mental Exercises

Counting a bridge hand requires you to train your brain to think in patterns of 4. Instead of counting 52 cards. You want to focus on counting four groups of 13. The following exercises will help train your brain to this this way. The best part is you can do these exercises while you play bridge!

Exercise #1 (What's the Pin)

The first exercise is called “What's the Pin” which trains your brain to think in base 13 instead of base 10. The pin number is the four-digit number of the shape of the hand in rank order. For example:

♠ AK4 ♥ Q765 ♦ J9 ♣ A874

This hand's pin is 3-4-2-4 (spades, hearts, diamonds and clubs).

- Each time you sort your hand – *identify your hand's pin number.*
- Each time the dummy comes down – *identify the dummy's pin number.*

Exercise #2 (Other Three Hands)

The second exercise you can do while you are dummy! Seeing only one hand makes this exercise a bit more challenging but, hey, what else do you have to do while you are dummy?

- Analyze the bidding and opening lead
- Add up what you know about each player's suit length
- Watch the played tricks and defender's signals
- Depending on the contract:
 - If the contract is notrump, figure out the pattern for the opening lead suit.
 - If the contract is a suit, figure out the pattern of the trump suit.
 - Eventually, you can expand this dummy exercise to two suits, then three suits, then all four.

Exercise #3 (Declarer & Defender)

The third exercise you can do while you are declarer and defender.

- **As Declarer:**
 - Focus on the pattern of your working suit (potential winner suit).
 - Then move to a second suit.
- **As Defender:**
 - Focus on the pattern of the opening lead suit.
 - Then move to Declarer's working suit.