



# Adventures in Bridge

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## ***This Week in Bridge***

### **(335) Fitting Cards and Wasted Values**

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Level: 1

Robert S. Todd

[robert@advinbridge.com](mailto:robert@advinbridge.com)

#### **General**

When we evaluate our hand, we need to consider how our hand fits together with partner's hand. Having a fit is an important part of this consideration, but it the way our honor cards fit together with partner's honors and length is also an important consideration. The concepts of *Fitting Cards* (honors in partner's long suit) and *Misfitting Cards* (also called *Wasted Values*) are both valuable tools for helping us re-evaluate our hand as we get more information about the way our hand fits with partner's hand.

One thing we learn with experience is that Aces are wonderful cards that are undervalued when we only give them 4 points. Meanwhile, Jacks are not good cards and we frequently overvalue them. Part of learning to evaluate our hands is about understanding how to properly value these kinds of cards and to re-evaluate them as we get more information to help us determine if they are fitting cards or wasted values. Let's take a look at how we re-evaluate our hand for the location of these and other honors.

#### **Fitting Cards**

When we have honors in partner's long suit, these cards help set up the little cards in that suit more quickly than if we have xx or xxx (just as is the case when we have points in our own long suit). Having a holding like KJ or KJx in partner's long suit is better than having that holding in an unbid suit. These fitting honors make partner's suit far more likely to take tricks later in the play - the suit will be much easier to "set up".

Remember, we generally prefer to have points in our long suits. If not in our own suit, then it is best to have them in partner's suit. When we made adjustments to the value of our hand early in the auction, we add length points for a decent quality suit only. Similarly, we should re-evaluate our hand when we hold fitting cards in partner's suit. By adding points to our hand for these fitting cards we are effectively adding length points to partner's hand. We do so because we know that their suit to likely to play better than they expect.

If partner opens (or responds) in a suit where we have good honors, then we should upgrade. As the auction progresses, we upgrade our fitting cards in each suit where partner shows length. Partner does the same in our suits, upgrading their fitting cards in each suit where we show length.



### Example

If partner opens 1♠ and we hold ♠Axx, this is an excellent holding and we need to re-evaluate our hand upwards. We have a fit, so that increases the value of our hand. We upgrade for this fit and more importantly, we upgrade for our fitting card. This ♠Axx goes from being worth 4 points to at least 5 points because we are helping set up partner's long suit more quickly. We also can add ruffing values to our hand (support points) for any shortness we might have in other suits. For example, if we have a singleton in ♣, then we need to add about 2 additional points to our hand. So here we would end up upgrading our hand an additional 3 points after partner opens 1♠ (1 point for the fitting card and 2 points for ruffing values.)

### Wasted Values

Just as points in partner's suits (fitting cards) or points in our long suits (length points) are more valuable than normal, points opposite partner's shortness are frequently less valuable than normal. These are called wasted values.

*Note: We call these values wasted, not worthless. We downgrade these points, not completely discount them.*

Let's look at some examples of wasted values. Consider the following holdings in a suit contract:

- KQx --- x This is a lot of wasted values. Partner had one loser in this suit before seeing our hand and our 5 HCP left them still having one loser.
- Kxx --- x Partner had one loser in this suit before seeing our hand and our 3 HCP left them still having one loser.
- Axx --- x This may not seem like wasted values, but it is. We covered partner's loser in that suit with our Ace, but it is not doing its full job. Remember an Ace is supposed to take a trick and help set up small cards underneath it. Here it does not do that, so it is somewhat devalued and wasted.

We downgrade these honors because we would prefer to have these points in other suits that are opposite partner's length – so that they fit together with partner's length and honors.

When we evaluate our hand for wasted values, we want to consider what types of cards are useful in which situations. Not all HCP are created equal! Queens and Jacks are worst opposite partner's short suits (almost useless in suit contracts). Queens and Jacks are more valuable in our own long suits or opposite partner's long suits. Ace and Kings are bad when they are opposite partner's short suits, but they do not lose all of their value. They still have a reasonable chance of taking a trick. Thus, we do not devalue them completely. Queens and Jacks are most likely to be wasted values since they are wasted opposite many more holdings. These Queens and Jacks are more useful opposite balanced hands – where partner has some length in all of the suits. *This is why Queens and Jacks are often thought of as notrump cards and Aces and Kings are often thought of as suit cards.*



## Conclusion

Finding out a lot about partner's shape often allows us to re-evaluate our hand, upgrading for fitting cards and downgrading for wasted values. Splinter bids are some of the most useful bids in this way – they show a fit, show shortness, and show values all in one call. This allows us to re-evaluate our hand using fits, fitting cards, and wasted values.

One of the most important parts of good hand evaluation is being able to visualize the hands. Visualize partner's hand and think about the way our hands fit together – both in fitting suits and fitting HCP. This visualization will allow you to think about how the play is likely to progress during the bidding and thus allow you to re-evaluate your hand and describe it to partner based on how useful it is likely to be.