

The Rule of Two and Three (and Four)

Culbertson's rule of two and three (and four) is a guide as to what level to bid if you decide to pre-empt. You assume that the opponents can make game and that you will be doubled. Another assumption is that partner can produce one trick (funny how mine rarely do). Anyway, these assumptions all boil down to this general rule: -

<u>The Rule of Two</u>	When pre-empter's side is vulnerable and the opposition are not, then the rule of two applies. Pre-empter should be within two tricks of his contract. For example, you pre-empt 3♠ and are doubled. This hand contains 7 playing tricks and so conforms with the rule of two. What happens? Partner's dummy contributes one trick and so you make a total of eight, one down, -200 (doubled, vulnerable). A good save against the opponent's non-vul game (420).
♠ KQJ10976	
♥ 3	
♦ A75	
♣ 87	
<u>The Rule of Three</u>	This applies when the vulnerability is equal; either both vulnerable or both non-vulnerable. This hand is a 3♠ opener under these circumstances, it contains 6 playing tricks, i.e. 3 short of the 3♠ contract. And if you end up doubled? With partner's expected trick you go down two. So 300 or 500 away as opposed to the 420 or 620 that the opponents would have got for their game.
♠ QJ109764	
♥ 3	
♦ A75	
♣ 87	
<u>The Rule of Four</u>	Now with favourable vulnerability (us non-vul with vul opponents) then anything goes! You can afford to go three down so we have the rule of four. Many of you would frown upon a 3♠ opener on just 3 points. 'points smoints!' If you play in 3♠ doubled then you make just 6 tricks (including partner's hoped for trick) and you go minus three (-500) as opposed to the opponents 620 for their vulnerable game. And what if partner does not have a trick? Then obviously the opponents have missed a slam.
♠ QJ109764	
♥ 3	
♦ 752	
♣ 87	