Sam’s Golden Rules

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|  | Bidding |
| 1 | Rule Number One - for every rule, there are always exceptions. Do not apply them blindly. |
| 2 | Nothing can replace homework and lots of discussions, bidding practices and agreements with your partner. |
| 3 | Always try to describe your hand accurately and leave the decision to partner. Do not mastermind the bidding. |
| 4 | When you are faced with several alternatives, choose the less risky and more flexible one. |
| 5 | Do not invent bids at the table. Partner will never be able to work it out. |
| 6 | Try to picture all four hands around the table when there is vigorous competition. |
| 7 | Learn the Law of Total Tricks: five-four fits are very powerful. |
| 8 | Be alert and make lead-directing bids in competition |
| 9 | Always ask yourself - have I shown my hand in full in the previous rounds (or - have I got a maximum or minimum given my previous bids)? You see, every bid is a ‘sub-set’ of your earlier bid... |
| 10 | Distribution is more important than high card points. |
| 11 | Pay special attention to suit textures and playing strength. |
| 12 | Honors in long suits carry their weights, while those in short suits should be discounted. |
| 13 | Aces and Kings are undervalued while Queens and Jacks are overvalued. |
| 14 | Honors in partner’s suit are nice, not so when you hold them in opponents’ suit(s). |
| 15 | Consider this when you overcall - does the hand belong to your side or to the opponents? |
| 16 | Never preempt and bid again. |
| 17 | When your side has a fit, always bid to the limit, do not daisy-pick along the way and allow room for opponents to sacrifice. |
| 18 | Bid games aggressively, and slams conservatively. |
| 19 | Think twice before making the final pass |
| 20 | Don’t overuse Blackwood. Learn to employ attitude cue-bids as much as possible. Blackwood is a convention for you to avoid bad slams, not reach good ones. |
| 21 | When you are about to make an ingenious bid, think about whether this would be the normal bid at the other table/in comparison with the field. |
| 22 | When you want to accept an invitation and bit game, consider this - could partner have shown a stronger hand by cue bidding or by going through another sequence? |
| 23 | When you are short in opponents’ suit, you can afford to bid more aggressively. |
| 24 | Stay low when your side has a potential misfit. |
| 25 | Two suit fits are very powerful. In competitive situations, bid one more for the road. |
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| 27 | When you have a freak hand, remember the suits are going to break badly for opponents. |
| 28 | Don’t let opponents push you around. |
| 29 | Think about whether your overcall will take away bidding space for opponents. |
|  | Defense |
| 1 | Do you want to attack (active), or do you want to defend (passive)? |
| 2 | Don’t be lazy - ALWAYS count declarer’s points, distribution and winners. Use your toes if necessary! |
| 3 | Don’t go by your hunch. Logic is more superior. Try to be a good player before you become a great player. |
| 4 | Form a clear picture of both declarer and partner’s hands before playing a card. |
| 5 | Signal to your partner only when it matters. |
| 6 | Attitude before count. Count before suit preference. Suit preference only when obvious. |
| 7 | A good understanding in signaling philosophy between you and your partner is important. |
| 8 | Use the process of elimination to decide which card to play. This will often simplify your decision. |
| 9 | Always draw trumps when declarer announces two suits, one of which fits dummy. |
| 10 | Don’t be prone to leading/returning short suits in low level contracts - this will create slow winners for declarer. |
| 11 | Play the ‘known’ card. |
| 12 | A little bit of camouflage won’t hurt. |
| 13 | Do not play a card automatically in the middle of the game, even when the decision is obvious, remember rule Number Two. |
| 14 | When declarer has refrained from playing dummy’s long suit, be careful, he may be hoping to swindle/snatch the game-going trick. |
| 15 | Make desperate plays only when you are desperate. |
| 16 | Discipline prevails in the long haul. Avoid heroics unless you are 95 % certain it will get you a spectacular result. |
| 17 | When you are long in trumps (or when you think your partner is long in trumps), adopt a forcing game. |
| 18 | When you have made a bad shift and blown a trick, do not panic. |
| 19 | Consider the hold-up when you are dealt the trump ace. |
|  | Opening Leads |
| 1 | Always try to form an opinion of all four hands before selecting your lead. |
| 2 | Whenever possible, try to lead from a sequence. |
| 3 | Slams must be attacked, you only have one chance - says Benito Garozzo |
| 4 | When trumps are breaking badly, play a forcing game. |
| 5 | Do not be eager to lead a short suit, looking for a ruff, against a low level contract. |
| 6 | Against low-level contracts, leading a trump is often a good idea. |
| 7 | Learn and adopt ‘Journalist’ leads against no-trumps |
| 8 | Avoid heroics |
| 9 | When opponents reached no-trump contracts without going through Stayman |
| 10 | In imps, lead the suit that requires least from partner to defeat the contract. |
| 11 | When you have a weak hand and are on lead against 3NT |
| 12 | When you have to lead from QJTXX or KQJXX or J1T9XX or KQTXX etc., lead 4th best against NT if (a) you have a side entry and (b) the bidding tells you either declarer or dummy has 4 cards in the suit. |
| 13 | Always take into consideration about partner’s silence, in other words, his failure to overcall or double an artificial bid or cue bid - the dog that didn’t bark in the dark is usually a good enough hint. |
| 14 | Play with the ‘field.’ |
| 15 | Don’t lead a singleton (side suit) when you also have a singleton trump. |

Sources: Sam’s Golden Rules