

## Answers to bridge play problems (1)

1.

♠ 8 3 2  
♥ 10 9 5 3  
♦ 9 7 3  
♣ A K 9

Lead: ♠J

Contract: 3NT South

W N E  
S

♠ A K Q  
♥ A Q  
♦ A K 6 2  
♣ 7 5 3 2

Playing pairs with a favourite partner you pick up the South hand. You reach 3NT but when dummy goes down you see that although you have 29 points between you, only 8 top tricks on show. The opening lead buys you some time but where do you look for your ninth?

- A:
- i) You could take the simplistic (50%) approach by crossing to dummy with a club and taking the heart finesse. If it loses however, you are not well placed.
  - ii) An improvement would be to duck a diamond or a club, win the return and then take the heart finesse. Now either a winning finesse or a 3:3 break in your minor will see you home. About a 68% chance.
  - iii) But there is a 100% line. Win the lead and play ♥A followed by the ♥Q. Now you have time to cross to dummy and play the ♥10 knocking out the Jack and establishing the ♥9 as your ninth trick.

♠ 8 3 2  
♥ 10 9 5 3  
♦ 9 7 3  
♣ A K 9

♠ J 10 9 7 6  
♥ K 8  
♦ Q J 5 4  
♣ J 6

W N E  
S

♠ 5 4  
♥ J 7 6 4 2  
♦ 10 8  
♣ Q 10 8 4

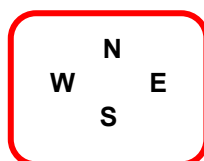
♠ A K Q  
♥ A Q  
♦ A K 6 2  
♣ 7 5 3 2

As you can see from the full hand, neither of the first two possibilities materialised. Line i) was the line taken by declarer at the table. Down 1.

2.

♠ K Q 3  
 ♥ A Q J 5  
 ♦ 2  
 ♣ Q J 10 9 4

Lead: ♥6



Contract:

3NT by South

♠ 9 7 2  
 ♥ 3  
 ♦ A K Q J 7 5 3  
 ♣ 7 2

Playing pairs with a regular Partner against (previous boards seem to suggest) a strong pair, you open a 'gambling' 3NT as South and play there. On the ♥6 Partner tables a more than satisfactory dummy. Partner won't be happy if you blow this one so what is your line of play to give you the best chance?

A: Let's think this one through. You count tricks. 7 diamonds, 1(or possibly 2 hearts) 1 spade. Giving you 9. Count losers. 1 spade, 2 clubs and 1 heart. So your contract appears to be secure. It is pairs so you go for the over-tick and take the finesse. It loses, and back comes a....diamond!! (I said these defenders were on the case). You think this is a bit of a strange defence but as you cash your winners discarding from dummy is becoming more tricky, – in fact impossible. You need to keep ♠KQ ♥A and ♣QJ10 as your last FOUR cards otherwise the defenders can cash the last 4 tricks and down you go.

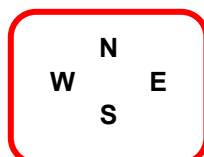
Let us rewind. Your initial assessment was correct there are 9 tricks there for the taking and only 4 losers providing you don't get greedy. Win the heart lead and generate your spade trick immediately – play the ♠K and now if they win and try stranding you in hand the only card you need to keep in dummy is the ♠Q.

Declarer took the finesse and paid the penalty.

3.

♠ Q 5 4 3  
 ♥ A 6 5  
 ♦ Q 9 8 3  
 ♣ 7 6

Lead: ♦6



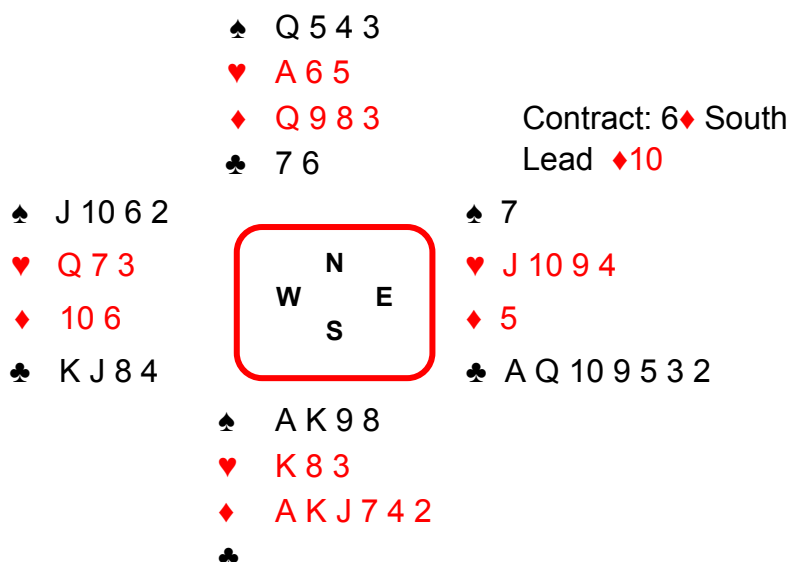
Contract:

6♦ South

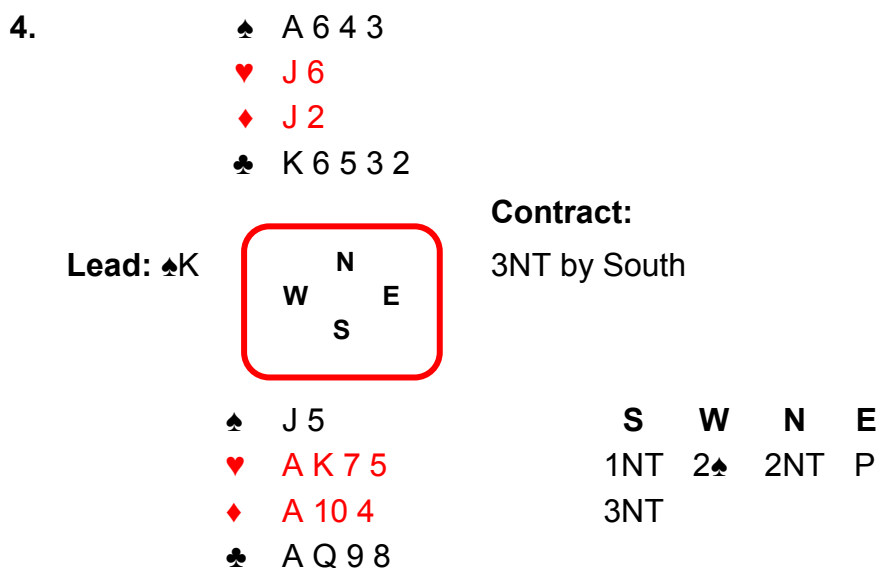
♠ A K 9 8  
 ♥ K 8 3  
 ♦ A K J 7 4 2  
 ♣

Playing teams scoring (imps) and playing with a regular partner you bid to a small slam in diamonds. You have done well to bid your slam on a combined 26 count but you notice that 13 tricks are probably available in spades. You fear you may lose imps. Don't get yourself side-tracked; you are playing in diamonds not spades and (clue) something good may happen to ensure you a good score – so focus on making the slam in hand.

A: You have an unavoidable heart loser and the hand is trivial if spades break 3:2 which they will most of the time. So, putting on your pessimist's hat, is there anything can you do if they break 4:1? Those of you who like me read bridge books may recognise this situation. It is not often that 'text book' hands appear at the bridge table but this was one. Here is the full hand.



The play is to draw trumps and ruff the clubs whilst doing so; cash ONE top spade in hand and then play ♥AK and your losing heart. Whoever wins must either lead a spade or give you a ruff and discard. If they can lead a spade then either the spades behave or the position of the spade suit becomes clear allowing you pick up the spade suit. At the table declarer just drew trumps and tried to cash the spades resulting in one off losing a spade and a heart providing partner and I with a 13 imp gain.



You find yourself playing with an 'unknown' Partner and agree to play a strong no-trump. Luckily Partner provides you with a spade stopper and – clubs behaving – you count 9 tricks in your 3NT. Problem - what problem? Plan the play.

A: The play at the table was straightforward. 'To save time', declarer seeing 9 tricks won the opening lead immediately and crossed to the top clubs in hand - and then there seemed to be a long delay. Eventually he emerged with 7 tricks and we moved on.

Contract: 3NT South  
Lead ♠K

♠ A 6 4 3 ♥ J 6 ♦ J 2 ♣ K 6 5 3 2	<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;">           N W      E      S         </div>	♠ 8 ♥ 10 9 3 2 ♦ 9 8 7 5 3 ♣ J 10 7	
♠ K Q 10 9 7 2 ♥ Q 8 4 ♦ K Q 6 ♣ 4			

♠ J 5 ♥ A K 7 5 ♦ A 10 4 ♣ A Q 9 8	<table style="margin: auto;"> <tr> <th style="padding: 0 10px;">S</th> <th style="padding: 0 10px;">W</th> <th style="padding: 0 10px;">N</th> <th style="padding: 0 10px;">E</th> </tr> <tr> <td>1NT</td> <td>2♠</td> <td>2NT</td> <td>P</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3NT</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	S	W	N	E	1NT	2♠	2NT	P	3NT			
S	W	N	E										
1NT	2♠	2NT	P										
3NT													

This was the full hand and by now you will have appreciated that the 'problem' is a blockage in the club suit. You cannot cash the fifth club as you must win the fourth round in hand and have no way back to dummy! The solution is simple – once you appreciate the problem; you need to throw away your blocking club and the only place you can do this is on the spades. So duck the spade lead, and the second should West persist and on winning the third round, jettison a club. Should West switch suits then YOU play a spade to achieve the same result; the clubs can now be cashed for 5 tricks and game.

5.

♠ 5 ♥ A 6 5 2 ♦ A Q 9 7 4 ♣ K J 6	<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;">           N W      E      S         </div>	♠ A Q ♥ K 8 3 ♦ J 10 2 ♣ Q 7 5 4 2	Contract: 3NT South  <table style="margin: auto;"> <tr> <th style="padding: 0 10px;">E</th> <th style="padding: 0 10px;">S</th> <th style="padding: 0 10px;">W</th> <th style="padding: 0 10px;">N</th> </tr> <tr> <td>1♠</td> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td>Dbl</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>2NT</td> <td>P</td> <td>3NT</td> </tr> </table>	E	S	W	N	1♠	P	P	Dbl	P	2NT	P	3NT
E	S	W	N												
1♠	P	P	Dbl												
P	2NT	P	3NT												

Lead: ♠J

You and Partner brush aside East's opening bid and end in what seems to be in a good contract. A winning diamond finesse should see you home. But do you really

expect it to succeed? East needs all the outstanding points to justify his opening bid.  
Can you turn this to your advantage?

A: It may help to see the full hand. This hand is an exercise in counting- initially points telling you that the diamond finesse is likely to fail – but also counting to 9 tricks.

	♠ 5			
	♥ A 6 5 2		Contract: 3NT by South	
	♦ A Q 9 7 4		Lead ♠J	
	♣ K J 6			
♠ J 10 4 3 2		♠ K 9 8 7 6		
♥ 10 9 7 4		♥ Q J		
♦ 8 5 3		♦ K 6		
♣ 8		♣ A 10 9 3		

♠ A Q		E	S	W	N
♥ K 8 3		1♠	P	P	Dbl
♦ J 10 2		P	2NT	P	3NT
♣ Q 7 5 4 2					

The key to this hand is that you require 4 additional tricks from diamonds and clubs to go with the 5 tricks you have but can only afford to give up the lead once. You must lose the ♠A and the diamond finesse rates to be wrong. What can you do? You could rely on the club suit behaving 3:2 and just knock out the Ace. But that would lead to disaster here. However, consider the effect of crossing to dummy with the ♥A and leading a SMALL club towards hand. What can East do? If he ducks your ♣Q wins and with one trick in the bag you can tackle diamonds for the extra three. If East jumps in with his Ace you now have 4 club tricks and don't need the diamond finesse. Heads you win - tails East loses.

6.

	♠ A 6 4	
	♥ J 9 2	
	♦ Q 8 2	
	♣ Q J 7 4	

Lead: ♠2		♠ K 7 5		S	W	N	E
		♥ Q 7 5		1NT	P	P	P
		♦ J 7 4					
		♣ A K 9 8					

Playing teams against reasonable opponents you open 1NT and everyone passes. West leads the ♠2. Despite a combined 23 points you only have 6 top tricks. Where to look for a seventh. (Should you duck the opening lead East will win with the ♠10 and return the ♠J.)

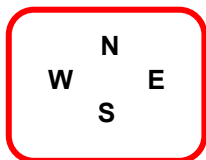
A: This type of hand typifies why less experienced players often dislike playing in 1NT. When we play in a slam our mindset is geared to only losing 1 trick. When playing in 1NT you can afford to lose 6 tricks and often beginners are loathed to allow the defenders to have their 6 and get too busy looking for the seventh rather than waiting for it to come to them.

There are two clues here as to how to come to seven tricks and fulfil your contract. Firstly the lead of the ♠2 – if this is fourth highest then the spade suit is behaving – giving up the lead will not result in an avalanche of spade tricks. Secondly, the nature of your red suits: both these suits are ‘frozen’. For those of you who are unfamiliar with this term, a frozen suit is a suit that whichever side attacks it, is likely to concede a trick. The way to play a frozen suit is, if possible, to get the opponents to play the suit for you. So, win the lead, cash your four club tricks and the other top spade and exit with a spade. Now sit back and the opponents can cash no more than two spades, ♦AK, ♥AK before presenting you with a red suit winner.

At the table declarer ducked the first spade and had to broach a red suit for herself. This resulted in 1 down (-100) and a gain of 5 imps when team mates played as described above.

This was the full hand.

		♠ A 6 4			
		♥ J 9 2		Contract: 1NT by South	
		♦ Q 8 2		Lead ♠2	
		♣ Q J 7 4			
♠ Q 9 8 2				♠ J 10 3	
♥ A 8 4				♥ K 10 6 3	
♦ K 9 6				♦ A 10 5 3	
♣ 6 5 2				♣ 10 3	
		♠ K 7 5			
		♥ Q 7 5			
		♦ J 7 4			
		♣ A K 9 8			



S	W	N	E
1NT	P	P	P