

Declarer Play In No Trumps

♠ J1092
 ♥ 432
 ♦ KJ9
 ♣ Q73
 ♠ AK8
 ♥ A87
 ♦ 865
 ♣ AK42
 ♠ Q73
 ♥ K105
 ♦ A7432
 ♣ 86
 ♠ 654
 ♥ QJ96
 ♦ Q10
 ♣ J1095

Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
2N	Pass	3N	All pass

There are eight top winners and where do we go for the ninth trick? The only source is the long diamond suit and we hope the suit breaks 3-2 (4-1 might be all right too). We can win the lead (probably ♠J) and duck a diamond. On regaining the lead we can either cash ♦A or duck another round. With diamonds breaking 3-2 we'll have ten tricks after the spade lead.

♠ K742
 ♥ 872
 ♦ 9852
 ♣ QJ
 ♠ 1053
 ♥ A10654
 ♦ K7
 ♣ 1074
 ♠ J986
 ♥ J9
 ♦ QJ4
 ♣ 9653
 ♠ AQ
 ♥ KQ3
 ♦ A1063
 ♣ AK82

Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♦ ²	Pass	2♣ ¹
Pass	3♣ ⁴	Pass	3♦ ⁵
Pass	3N	All pass	

1 21-22, balanced; or eight playing tricks 2 Relay 3 21-22 4 Stayman 5 No 4card major

After a heart lead (4th best ♥5) declarer has nine top tricks – three spades, one heart, one diamond and four clubs. To succeed it's a case of taking care to avoid any blockages. Win the lead, cash ♠AQ and cross to ♣J. Cash dummy's winning club and spade before returning to hand with a diamond to the ace. Now cash the third and fourth club winners.

♠ 1052
 ♥ 985
 ♦ J765
 ♣ J105
 ♠ 876
 ♥ 763
 ♦ 9875
 ♣ KQ643
 ♠ AK
 ♥ AQ10
 ♦ KQ42
 ♣ A982
 ♠ QJ943
 ♥ KJ42
 ♦ A103
 ♣ 7

Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	2♣ ¹	Pass
2♦ ²	Pass	2N ³	Pass
3N	All pass		

1 21-22, balanced; or eight playing tricks 2 Relay 3 21-22 *might open 1♠ setting East West a bidding challenge!

A simple three no trumps contract where it would be easy to go wrong. South leads a spade and East wins to play a top diamond. There are now nine tricks by way of two spades, a heart, a diamond and five clubs. If, however, declarer starts on clubs by playing ♣2 there will be no way back – the club suit has become blocked. East should start with ♣8 (or ♣9) from hand and the suit is satisfactorily unravelled.

♠ K104
 ♥ Q2
 ♦ 8752
 ♣ K732
 ♠ Q752
 ♥ J10964
 ♦ 93
 ♣ 86
 ♠ 983
 ♥ 75
 ♦ AKQJ
 ♣ J1094
 ♠ AJ6
 ♥ AK83
 ♦ 1064
 ♣ AQ5

Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	1N	Pass	2N ¹
Pass	3N ²	All Pass	

1 17-18, invitational 2 Accepts the invitation with a maximum (8-9)

There is no room for error when the defence cashes the first four tricks (in diamonds). Declarer has two spades, three hearts and three clubs. That's eight tricks, one short of game. North can hope for a 3-3 club break or that West discards badly (throwing two hearts). After three rounds of both hearts and clubs declarer will know that East started with four clubs and two hearts. That means East also started with three spades, giving West four in that suit. The odds favour, by 4:3, West holding the queen of spades, so declarer can take the two way finesse through West's assumed queen.

But there is a foolproof reason for playing West for ♠Q. East passed initially but has shown up with eleven points (including ♣J). That hand can't hold ♠Q (else the hand would have opened 1N).

Play a spade to the ten, supremely confident that it will hold.

<p> ♠QJ109 ♥873 ♦9864 ♣A4 </p> <p> ♠K8642 ♠A7 ♥9 ♥A652 ♦KJ32 ♦A105 ♣KQ10 ♣J875 </p> <p> ♠53 ♥KQJ104 ♦Q7 ♣9632 </p>	<p>Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable</p> <table> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> <td>1N</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2♥¹</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♠</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2N</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3N¹</td> <td>All Pass</td> </tr> </table> <p>1 Transfer showing 5+spades 2 Borderline</p> <p>The contract looks pretty hopeless on ♥K lead but declarer can prevail if he holds his nerve and takes advantage of a hoped-for benign distribution. It's important to duck two rounds of hearts (if, as here, they are 5-3, that stops South cashing the fourth and fifth winners in the suit).</p> <p>We must hope that North has ♣A. That hurdle is crossed successfully and North cannot return a heart. East still sees South as the danger hand and can arrange his play in diamonds as an <i>avoidance play</i>, keeping South off lead. He plans to take the <i>two-way diamond finesse</i> through South. He cashes ♦A and plays ♦5. In fact the queen of diamonds appears and there are now ten tricks – two spades, one heart, four diamonds and three clubs.</p>	West	North	East	South		Pass	1N	Pass	2♥ ¹	Pass	2♠	Pass	2N	Pass	3N ¹	All Pass
West	North	East	South														
	Pass	1N	Pass														
2♥ ¹	Pass	2♠	Pass														
2N	Pass	3N ¹	All Pass														
<p> ♠63 ♥AQ106 ♦Q942 ♣K98 </p> <p> ♠Q109 ♠J754 ♥KJ873 ♥4 ♦AJ65 ♦87 ♣7 ♣QJ10432 </p> <p> ♠AK82 ♥952 ♦K103 ♣A65 </p>	<p>Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable</p> <table> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> <td>1N</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♣</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>2N</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3N</td> </tr> </table> <p>All pass</p> <p>A Stayman/invitational sequence sees North South reach game. The results will vary with the contract struggling on a black suit lead. If West leads a 4th best heart (perhaps not wisest when North, having used Stayman, is marked with four hearts), declarer can make four heart tricks : South realises that if ♥7 is 4th best, the Rule of Eleven puts East with no card higher than that. The lead can run to ♥9 and both ♥Q and ♥10 can be finessed later. A diamond trick can always be built for the ninth trick.</p> <p>If West leads a diamond declarer is also in control. That simplifies the suit such that there are three winners there. A finesse of ♥Q and declarer is home.</p>	West	North	East	South			Pass	1N	Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass	2N	Pass	3N
West	North	East	South														
		Pass	1N														
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠														
Pass	2N	Pass	3N														

<p>♠QJ1098 ♥743 ♦J6 ♣K74</p> <p>♠A74 ♠K52 ♥K10 ♥AQJ ♦K87 ♦A432 ♣QJ1098 ♣653</p> <p>♠63 ♥98652 ♦Q1095 ♣A2</p>	<p>Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable</p> <table><tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>Pass</td></tr><tr><td>1N</td><td>Pass</td><td>3N</td><td>All Pass</td></tr></table> <p>A simple sequence sees West declare three no trumps on the top-of-a-sequence lead of ♠Q. How many tricks declarer makes depends on what West plays at trick one. He will have to play on clubs to come to nine tricks (two spades, three hearts, two diamonds and two clubs).</p> <p>Declarer should duck the opening lead in both hands despite holding both the ace and the king. Ducking, even with two stops, is often right when the lead has to be lost twice. Here if South wins the first club he has no spade to return before North's club entry is knocked out; and if North wins the first club he'll already have used his entry to the potential spade winners. If North holds both club honours declarer can never succeed.</p>	West	North	East	South				Pass	1N	Pass	3N	All Pass
West	North	East	South										
			Pass										
1N	Pass	3N	All Pass										
<p>♠1064 ♥AK2 ♦A10964 ♣J2</p> <p>♠QJ95 ♠87 ♥J86 ♥Q109 ♦5 ♦K872 ♣A9754 ♣K1086</p> <p>♠AK32 ♥7543 ♦QJ3 ♣Q3</p>	<p>Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all</p> <table><tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>1N</td><td>Pass</td><td>2♣</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>2♦</td><td>Pass</td><td>2N</td></tr></table> <p>All pass</p> <p>This contract should always fail as the defence can take five club tricks and ♦K. That should happen on the lead of a club (and provided East West don't block the suit, something that is possible).</p> <p>Defence isn't always that easy and if East West fail to play on clubs at any point declarer may get home. North can duck a heart and will make three heart tricks (to go with two spades and four diamonds) when the suit breaks 3-3. If he plans to duck a spade first that doesn't work and gives the defence another chance to play on clubs. If they don't seize that chance declarer can still try hearts later ... but he's running out of time and, probably, luck.</p>	West	North	East	South	Pass	1N	Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass	2N
West	North	East	South										
Pass	1N	Pass	2♣										
Pass	2♦	Pass	2N										