

Defending No Trump Contracts

♠K97
 ♥1096
 ♦A96
 ♣AK32
 ♠10832
 ♥J3
 ♦10832
 ♣QJ7
 ♠A54
 ♥KQ542
 ♦75
 ♣1084
 ♠QJ6
 ♥A87
 ♦KQJ4
 ♣965

Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all

West	North	East	South
	1N ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3N

All pass
1 12-14

With only two honours East leads a 4th highest ♥4 against a no trump contract (give that hand ♥J) or the near-touching ♥10 and ♥K would be the correct lead). West plays ♥J (3rd hand high) and returns his partner's suit. Declarer could win this trick but may duck again. He will perform win the third heart and play on spades to try to make the contract.

♠A is with the long hearts so East wins and cashes two further hearts to defeat the contract by one trick. Declarer has been defeated by the 5-2 heart break and the ace of spade being with the long hearts.

Had East led ♥K the defence would have created an insurmountable blockage for themselves. East could continue with a second heart but declarer would allow West to hold the trick. West would have no heart to return and declarer's heart stopper would still be in place.

♠10743
 ♥8
 ♦932
 ♣KQJ109
 ♠Q95
 ♥AQ54
 ♦K87
 ♣873
 ♠AKJ
 ♥76
 ♦QJ10654
 ♣A6
 ♠862
 ♥KJ10932
 ♦A
 ♣542

Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♦	1♥
2N ⁽¹⁾		3N	All pass

1 11-12, balanced, natural, game invitational (no Jacoby 2N after intervention)

North could lead ♥8 but a singleton lead is not very attractive against no trumps. North's clubs are so good that a top-of-a-sequence lead of ♠K is a stand out.

Declarer can hold up one round of clubs but is forced to take the second. He needs diamond tricks to make the contract so plays on this suit. South wins but has a third club to gain entry to his partner's hand. The defence takes four clubs and ♦A to defeat the contract.

Had North led his partner's suit declarer would have been a vital tempo ahead of the defence. He again knocks out ♦A but has eleven tricks. Different lead ... a three trick difference.

♠AKQ
 ♥Q42
 ♦874
 ♣KJ107

♠75
 ♥105
 ♦AQ93
 ♣98532
 ♠10962
 ♥9873
 ♦J102
 ♣A4
 ♠J843
 ♥AKJ6
 ♦K65
 ♣Q6

Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1N ⁽¹⁾

Pass 3N All pass
1 12-14

West leads a 2nd-from-a-bad suit ♠8 (some may lead ♠9, top from rubbish) and, with a sight of dummy, East knows there's no future in the club suit (further, East, using the Rule of Eleven, knows West doesn't have a good holding in the suit).

East takes the first trick and switches to the knave of diamonds. Declarer cannot prevent the defence taking four diamonds and the top club to defeat the contract.

Had East woodenly returned a club declarer could unblock the spade winners and eventually make eleven tricks – four spades, four hearts and three clubs.

♠K9543
 ♥J832
 ♦A76
 ♣8
 ♠A1086
 ♥KQ6
 ♦985
 ♣A53
 ♠7
 ♥A75
 ♦KQJ103
 ♣K942
 ♠QJ2
 ♥1094
 ♦42
 ♣QJ1076

Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

West	North	East	South
1N ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3N	All pass

1 12-14

North leads a 4th best ♠4 on which his partner plays ♠J (following the 3rd hand high principle but playing the lower of touching honours too). Declarer has six top tricks outside the diamond suit so needs to develop winners there to fulfil the contract.

Declarer may win the first spade because he has reasonable spade intermediates and has hopes of making a second trick there. He plays a diamond and North wins. North can work out that partner has ♠Q (else West would have won the trick cheaply with that card). He confidently underleads ♠K. South wins and the return of the suit ensures the contract's demise.

Had South wrongly played ♠Q on the first round North would have been entitled to play West for ♠J (else why hasn't partner played the lower of touching honours?) and wouldn't have found this defence.

Now all the above could be academic as, on the lie of the cards, declarer can always succeed by taking the second spade. With North holding ♦A the defence cannot run the spades as West's ♠10 is protected from attack. Tricky.

<div><div><div>♠A102</div><div>♥632</div><div>♦10832</div><div>♣QJ6</div></div><div><div>♠QJ6</div><div>♥87</div><div>♦KQJ4</div><div>♣AK95</div></div><div><div>♠K973</div><div>♥KQ9</div><div>♦A96</div><div>♣732</div></div><div><div>♠854</div><div>♥AJ1054</div><div>♦75</div><div>♣1084</div></div></div>	<div>Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable</div> <div><table><tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>Pass</td><td>1N⁽¹⁾</td><td>Pass</td></tr><tr><td>3N</td><td>All pass</td><td></td><td></td></tr></table><div>1 12-14</div><div>South's best shot is to lead from his length so he starts with a top-of-an-interior-sequence ♥J. If declarer wins the first trick he'll play on spades. North will take ♠A and a return of a heart gives the defence four hearts and one spade winner to defeat the game. Had declarer ducked the first trick the contract would also be defeated provided South continues with a low (non-Ace) heart. The defence similarly wins the spade and reverts to hearts.</div><div>The losing defence (apart from not leading a heart) would be for South to start with a misguided 4th best heart lead of ♥5. Now East has a cheap winner (with ♥9) and a second heart stopper to boot.</div></div>	West	North	East	South		Pass	1N ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3N	All pass		
West	North	East	South										
	Pass	1N ⁽¹⁾	Pass										
3N	All pass												
<div><div><div>♠QJ6</div><div>♥863</div><div>♦AQJ9</div><div>♣A65</div></div><div><div>♠AK4</div><div>♥KJ1042</div><div>♦75</div><div>♣QJ4</div></div><div><div>♠853</div><div>♥75</div><div>♦10832</div><div>♣10872</div></div><div><div>♠10972</div><div>♥AQ9</div><div>♦K64</div><div>♣K93</div></div></div>	<div>Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable</div> <div><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⁽¹⁾</td></tr><tr><td>Pass ⁽²⁾</td><td>3N</td><td>All pass</td><td></td></tr></table><div>1 12-14</div><div>2 Too flat to overcall (5332 shape) but some might bid 2 ♥ – that could be a costly minus 500 when doubled</div><div>With three heart honours, including the touching ♥J 10, West should begin with a lead of the top-of-an-interior-sequence ♥J. Declarer has eight tricks on top (two hearts [now], four diamonds and two clubs) and can seek to develop his game-going winner in spades.</div><div>West, however, can win the first spade and continue hearts by playing a top honour. South wins and plays another spade but West has the other top spade. He cashes three hearts and, adding those to the two spade winners, the defence has its necessary five tricks to break the contract.</div><div>Had West led a 4th best ♥4 declarer would have won cheaply with ♥9 (shades of the previous hand) and would have had a second stop. That defence would have been wrong.</div><div>Notice that in order to defeat the contract West has to give up a heart trick. By doing this West ensures that the tempo is with the defence ("we'll take our five tricks before declarer gets his nine").</div></div>	West	North	East	South			Pass	1N ⁽¹⁾	Pass ⁽²⁾	3N	All pass	
West	North	East	South										
		Pass	1N ⁽¹⁾										
Pass ⁽²⁾	3N	All pass											

<p>♠K52 ♥K95 ♦K874 ♣642</p> <p>♠A94 ♥6 ♦106532 ♣AQ53</p> <p>♠863 ♥Q8432 ♦9 ♣J1098</p> <p>♠QJ107 ♥AJ107 ♦AQJ ♣K7</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>1♥</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>1N⁽¹⁾</td><td>Pass</td><td>2N⁽²⁾</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>3N</td><td>All pass</td><td></td></tr></table> <p>1 6-9, not 4spades 2 17-18, game invitational</p> <p>“4th best from the longest suit” <i>may</i> be correct but it’s usually wrong when the suit is poor and it has been bid by the opponents. Here if East leads ♥3, declarer wins cheaply and makes the contract by being able to finesse in hearts and knock out the ace of spades (three spades, four hearts and four diamonds – eleven in total).</p> <p>No, East should look elsewhere and the obvious lead is the top-of-a-sequence ♣J. This has an immediate impact. The defence has four quick tricks in clubs and the contract’s demise comes via the ace of spades.</p>	West	North	East	South				1♥	Pass	1N ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2N ⁽²⁾	Pass	3N	All pass	
West	North	East	South														
			1♥														
Pass	1N ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2N ⁽²⁾														
Pass	3N	All pass															
<p>♠984 ♥8 ♦106532 ♣Q653</p> <p>♠QJ107 ♥A764 ♦AQJ ♣A7</p> <p>♠K52 ♥532 ♦K874 ♣K42</p> <p>♠A63 ♥KQJ109 ♦9 ♣J1098</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>1♥</td><td>Pass</td><td>1N⁽¹⁾</td><td>Pass</td></tr><tr><td>2N⁽²⁾</td><td>Pass</td><td>3N</td><td>All pass</td></tr></table> <p>1 6-9, not 4spades 2 17-18, game invitational</p> <p>This situation is quite different from the previous board as South, who is on lead, has been dealt the opponents’ suit and it is a holding of great strength. South <i>knows</i> that he will make four heart tricks and the ace of spades (assuming, reasonably, declarer can’t win trick one and cash eight minor suit winners).</p> <p>The top-of-a-sequence lead of ♥K is automatic. A lead of any other suit will allow declarer to unblock the diamond winners, knock out the ace of spades and claim ten tricks (three spades, one heart, four diamonds and two clubs).</p>	West	North	East	South	1♥	Pass	1N ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2N ⁽²⁾	Pass	3N	All pass				
West	North	East	South														
1♥	Pass	1N ⁽¹⁾	Pass														
2N ⁽²⁾	Pass	3N	All pass														