

§58. Principles of Defence.

By the end of this chapter you should understand the following terms:

Passive Defence: Making leads which are unlikely to hurt the defending side, but which are not expected to have a positive value (*Encyclopaedia of Bridge*)

Active defence: Making leads which are aimed at taking tricks immediately or at setting up tricks quickly.

Tempo Hands: Hands where the defence need to take early tricks in a side-suit or declarer will discard his losers there.

This chapter is all about defensive strategy and attempts to show the difference between *passive defence* and *active defence*.

1. Passive Defence.

In general, if you have cards that you know are well-placed you can sit back and wait for your tricks to come to you. Someone has to lead the suit eventually and, as long as you don't lead away from a well-placed card, you will make your trick(s) in good time. The simplest example of this is a deal such as this:

<p>Hand 1 East plays in 6♠. South leads the ♥A.</p>	<p>♠ 7 ♥ 9 2 ♦ 10 8 6 5 4 3 ♣ 7 6 4</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">N</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Declarer</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">♥</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">K</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Q</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">♦</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">A</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Q</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">♣</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">A</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">J</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;"></td> <td style="padding: 2px;">S</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Dummy</td> </tr> </table>	♠	N	Declarer	♥	K	Q	♦	A	Q	♣	A	J		S	Dummy	<p>♠ A Q 8 6 4 3 ♥ 10 4 ♦ J ♣ K 9 3 2</p>
♠	N	Declarer																
♥	K	Q																
♦	A	Q																
♣	A	J																
	S	Dummy																
	<p>♠ K 2 ♥ A 8 6 5 3 ♦ K 9 7 ♣ Q 8 5</p>																	

East-West reach 6♠ by East and South leads the ♥A. Once that has stood up, and not been ruffed, South, by virtue of holding a well-placed ♠K, is certain to take the setting trick in the fullness of time. South can lead, quite literally, any card in his hand bar a Spade at trick two and the slam is certain to fail. Leading a Spade, on the other hand, is suicide.

All South has to do is sit there and wait patiently for the trump trick that will come in due course. Having taken trick one with his Ace, South's winning strategy is simply to get off lead (*play an exit card*) and let declarer get on with it. Sit back and watch the show...

'Ah, all things come to those who wait,'

(Violet Fane [1843 – 1905], Translated from *Tout vient à temps qui sait attendre*).

Getting off lead and waiting patiently to get what's rightfully yours is a powerful idea in this game. Many players are desperate both to get on lead and then to do something dynamic when they have it – these are frequently mistaken strategies.

In the deal below (Hand 2) the contract is 4♠ by East. Firstly, ask yourself what you would lead against 4♠ from that South hand and why.

<p>Hand 2 East plays in 4♠. South leads the ?</p>	<p>♠ None ♥ J 9 8 7 6 3 ♦ J 7 5 2 ♣ Q 8 7</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">N</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Declarer</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">♥</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">A</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Q</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">♦</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">K</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">8</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">♣</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">J</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">3</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;"></td> <td style="padding: 2px;">S</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Dummy</td> </tr> </table>	♠	N	Declarer	♥	A	Q	♦	K	8	♣	J	3		S	Dummy	<p>♠ K 10 9 8 3 2 ♥ A Q ♦ Q 9 ♣ A 10 6</p>
♠	N	Declarer																
♥	A	Q																
♦	K	8																
♣	J	3																
	S	Dummy																
	<p>♠ 7 5 4 ♥ K 2 ♦ A 10 6 3 ♣ K 9 5 4</p>																	

The best opening lead on this layout is to start off with a *passive* trump lead. This gives East-West nothing that they did not have already. A Diamond lead (high or low) allows East to make two Diamond tricks instead of the one that nature intended. A Heart lead concedes a trick immediately by sacrificing South's King and a Club lead opens up a *frozen suit*.

This is very much a deal where declarer should be left to his own devices. With passive defence (a trump lead) and subsequent passive *exit cards* declarer should lose a Heart, a Diamond and, crucially, two Clubs. If, on the other hand, South (or North, should he ever be able to) were to lead a Club, declarer could make two tricks in the suit and, therefore, lose only one trick there.

It must be said, however, that passivity in defence is not always the right answer, as the next section shows.

2. Tempo Hands.

A very simple example of a *tempo hand*, albeit in a slam contract, is shown in Hand 3:

Hand 3		♠ 9 4 2	
East plays in 6♥.		♥ 6	
South leads the ♣K.		♦ J 7 4 3	
		♣ 8 7 6 4 3	
♠ A K Q J 8	Dummy N Declarer S	♠ 10 6 5	
♥ 10 8 7 2		♥ K Q J 9 5 3	
♦ Q 10		♦ A K	
♣ A 5		♣ J 9	
		♠ 7 3	
		♥ A 4	
		♦ 9 8 6 5 2	
		♣ K Q 10 2	

In 6♥ East appears to have more than enough tricks (five Spades, five Hearts, two Diamonds and a Club) but the defenders have the *tempo* by virtue of the opening lead. After the opening lead of the ♣K has knocked out the ♣A, declarer has nowhere to go – as soon as East plays a trump then South can take the ♥A and a Club trick.

On many similar deals declarer may be in a position to discard his loser(s) before tackling trumps but here that is not the case. If East were to try to get a Club discard on the Spades before leading a Heart South would score an additional trick with his ♥4 and the slam would be defeated by two tricks.

The opening Club lead has given the defenders the all-important lead in the race to set up tricks, allowing North-South to make two tricks before declarer can make twelve. Note that 6♥ would be an easy contract on any lead but a Club.

No-trump contracts often fall into this *tempo* category in that the defenders are trying to get at their tricks (usually by setting up a long suit) before declarer gets at his. Hand 4 shows a very common type of hand, played in 3NT. South leads a low Spade.

Hand 4		♠ 10 9 2	
East plays in 3NT.		♥ 6 3 2	
South leads the ♠5.		♦ 8 3 2	
		♣ Q J 6 2	
♠ 6 3	Dummy N Declarer S	♠ A Q 8	
♥ Q J 8 7 5		♥ 10 9 4	
♦ K Q 9		♦ A J 10	
♣ A 10 3		♣ K 8 7 5	
		♠ K J 7 5 4	
		♥ A K	
		♦ 7 6 5 4	
		♣ 9 4	

With seven top tricks in No-trumps (counting two Spades after the lead plus three Diamonds and two Clubs), declarer has to play on Hearts for his two extra tricks.

However, South has the *tempo*. Winning the ♥K, South plays another Spade to knock out East's last stopper and can cash three Spade tricks when he gets on lead with the ♥A. Although the Spade lead away from a well-placed King into the ♠A Q seems to have cost a trick, South gains the upper hand by setting up his long suit.

As we have noted before, many No-trump contracts are races between the declarer and the defence. As a general rule, declarer and dummy have the edge by having the weight of high cards (if not, why are they declaring the contract?) but the defence has the crucial advantage of getting to go first in the race to set up a long suit.

Now, suppose that East is playing played Hand 4 in 4♥ rather than in 3NT (eminently possible, after a transfer sequence). In this case a Spade lead is fatal for South against 4♥ as it gives away a trick without gaining anything in return. Against 3NT, a Spade lead allows South to make the long Spades – in 4♥ the long Spades are useless as declarer would trump them in the West hand.

Of course, it has to be acknowledged that South does not know this – it might be that North has the ♠Q or even the ♠A. Nevertheless, Hand 4 is an illustration that it is often right to attack against 3NT (by leading a long suit) and often right to play passively against a suit contract, here by leading a Diamond from a rubbishy suit (or even a trump).

Paradoxically, there are hands played in trump contracts in which passive defences are ineffective. In these cases there may be a need to attack a suit early rather than go passive. Hand 3 is one such example, Hand 5 is another, played in 4♠ by East.

Firstly, ask yourself what you would lead as South against East's 4♠.

Hand 5.

East plays in 4♠.
South leads the ?

♠ 9 2			
♥ 9 8 3			
♦ 9 8 7 4 2			
♣ Q J 3			
♠ K 8 3		N	♠ A Q J 10 6
♥ Q J 10 7 6 4	Dummy	S	♥ A 5
♦ K			♦ Q J 5
♣ A 10 7			♣ 8 6 2
			♠ 7 5 4
			♥ K 2
			♦ A 10 6 3
			♣ K 9 5 4

On this layout, the **only** lead to break 4♠ is a low Club. That sets up two Club tricks immediately with the defence coming to a Diamond and a Heart in due course.

Now, let's say South leads a passive trump instead of an attacking low Club. East would then draw trumps and play Ace and another Heart, setting up the dummy with the ♣A as entry to the long Hearts. On lead with the ♥K, South could only cash the ♦A to hold 4♠ to eleven tricks.

So, a low Club lead is needed to get North-South's four tricks established rapidly before dummy's Hearts are set up for discards. Anything else and declarer can throw his losers away with time to spare. This is a classic *tempo hand*.

Now, you might notice many things about this deal. Perhaps the most pertinent fact is that the South cards of Hand 5 are uncannily similar to the South cards of Hand 2.

On Hand 5 South has the *tempo* to make two Clubs, a Heart and a Diamond. On Hand 2 South must lead a trump to avoid opening up a frozen suit in order to beat 4♠. Here, then, is one of the paradoxes of bridge. On Hand 2 South *cannot* lead a Club, on Hand 5 he *must* lead a Club. **How can he tell?**

The answer is that, often enough, he *cannot*. Frustrating, really. Who said bridge was an easy game?

The following two chapters try to throw light on the thorny problem of opening leads.

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§58. Quiz on Principles of Defence.

Here are three defensive problems for you to try.

In each case you are **South**, defending against West's contract. Your first act is to **Read the Lead**.

The Preliminary Analysis talks you through the first trick or two. What is your best defence?

Q1. ♠J

Declarer North South	Dummy North South	♠K Q 3 ♥Q 10 9 5 ♦Q 10 6 3 ♣Q 7
----------------------------	-------------------------	--

♠A 5 2
 ♥8 4 2
 ♦9 2
 ♣J 9 6 4 2

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass
4♥ by West		Opening lead: ♠J	

How should you defend against 4♥?
Your partner (North) leads the ♠J.

Preliminary Analysis.

Dummy plays the ♠Q on the opening lead and you win the ♠A. What now?

Partner's lead appears to be from the ♠J 10 9.

At trick two:

Should you passively return a trump?
Lead back a Spade?
Switch to a Diamond or a Club?

Q2. ♠J

Declarer North South	Dummy North South	♠K Q 3 ♥A Q 3 ♦6 4 3 ♣A K Q 10
----------------------------	-------------------------	---

♠A 5 2
 ♥8 4 2
 ♦9 2
 ♣8 6 5 3 2

West	North	East	South
2♥ ¹	Pass	4♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		
4♥ by West		Opening lead: ♠J	

1. Standard weak two. 5-9 points, six-card suit.

How should you defend against 4♥?
Your partner (North) leads the ♠J.

Preliminary Analysis.

Dummy plays the ♠Q on the opening lead and you win the ♠A. What now?

Partner's lead appears to be from the ♠J 10 9.

At trick two:

Should you passively return a trump?
Lead back a Spade?
Switch to a Diamond or a Club?

Q3. ♠J

Declarer North South	Dummy North South	♠A K 3 ♥K 10 4 ♦K J 10 9 ♣K Q 8
----------------------------	-------------------------	--

♠Q J 10 9
 ♥7 2
 ♦A Q
 ♣A 6 5 4 3

West	North	East	South
2♥ ¹	Pass	4♥	1♣
4♥ by West		Opening lead: ♣J	

1. *Weak jump overcall*. 5-9 points, six-card suit.

How should you defend against 4♥?
Your partner (North) leads the ♣J.

Preliminary Analysis.

Dummy plays the ♣Q on the opening lead and you win the ♣A. What now?

Partner's lead could be from any number of holdings given that you opened 1♣.

At trick two:

Should you passively return a trump?
Lead back a Club?
Switch to a Spade?

Answers.

A1.

	♠ J 10 9 7									
	♥ J									
	♦ K 8 4									
	♣ A 10 8 5 3									
♠ 8 6 4	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Declarer</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">N</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Dummy</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">S</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Declarer	N	Dummy	S			♠ K Q 3		
Declarer	N	Dummy								
S										
♥ A K 7 6 3			♥ Q 10 9 5							
♦ A J 7 5			♦ Q 10 6 3							
♣ K			♣ Q 7							
	♠ A 5 2									
	♥ 8 4 2									
	♦ 9 2									
	♣ J 9 6 4 2									

You are defending against 4♥ by West, reached after an invitational sequence. Partner leads the ♠J to the ♠Q and your ♠A and you are on lead at trick two.

There is no hurry to attack either Clubs or Diamonds on this hand; your best defence is simply to return a Spade. If partner has only four Spades, then this may set up a second defensive Spade trick.

If North has five then a Spade return gives declarer nothing and is a passive return, forcing declarer to do all the hard work. Here, on this lie of the cards, a Spade return sets up a trick for North, so that North-South make (in total) two Spades, a Heart and a Diamond for one off.

A2.

	♠ J 10 9 7									
	♥ 6									
	♦ A Q 8 7 5									
	♣ J 7 4									
♠ 8 6 4	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Declarer</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">N</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Dummy</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">S</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Declarer	N	Dummy	S			♠ K Q 3		
Declarer	N	Dummy								
S										
♥ K J 10 9 7 5			♥ A Q 3							
♦ K J 10			♦ 6 4 3							
♣ 9			♣ A K Q 10							
	♠ A 5 2									
	♥ 8 4 2									
	♦ 9 2									
	♣ 8 6 5 3 2									

You are defending against 4♥ by West, reached after a weak two opening bid and a game raise. Partner leads the ♠J to the ♠Q and your ♠A and you are on lead at trick two.

This is no time for passivity in defence, not with those intimidating Clubs as a rich source of tricks for declarer. As soon as he gets in, declarer will surely draw trumps and cash at least three Clubs (almost certainly four).

You have to switch at trick two to the ♦9, hoping to pick up tricks there, before the rats get at them. Here, North cashes two Diamonds and gives you a third-round ruff, defeating 4♥ before declarer gets his foot in the door.

A3.

	♠ 8 7 4									
	♥ 6 5									
	♦ 8 6 5 3 2									
	♣ J 10 9									
♠ 6 5 2	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Declarer</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">N</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Dummy</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">S</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Declarer	N	Dummy	S			♠ A K 3		
Declarer	N	Dummy								
S										
♥ A Q J 9 8 3			♥ K 10 4							
♦ 7 4			♦ K J 10 9							
♣ 7 2			♣ K Q 8							
	♠ Q J 10 9									
	♥ 7 2									
	♦ A Q									
	♣ A 6 5 4 3									

You are defending against 4♥ by West, reached after a weak jump overcall over your opening 1♣ bid. Partner leads the ♣J to the ♣Q and your ♠A and you are on lead at trick two.

It's just possible that the ♣J is a singleton, but it isn't very likely. When declarer gets in, he will draw trumps and set up a couple of tricks in Diamonds. You have the *tempo*, though, to set up a Spade winner, provided you lead one at trick two.

Thus, you must take the ♠A and switch to the ♠Q (or any Spade) and pursue this **Plan** when in with your Diamond honours. Eventually, declarer loses a Spade, two Diamonds and a Club for one off.

§58. Example hands 1 to 4.

Hand 1 Love all, dealer North

<p>♠ A 10 3 ♥ A K 6 4 2 ♦ A Q 6 ♣ 10 7</p> <p>♠ K 8 5 ♥ None ♦ 7 5 3 2 ♣ 9 8 6 5 4 2</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ J 9 7 6 ♥ J 10 9 ♦ K 8 4 ♣ A J 3</p> <p>♠ Q 4 2 ♥ Q 8 7 5 3 ♦ J 10 9 ♣ K Q</p>
	N										
W		E									
	S										

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	
4♥ by North		Opening lead: ♥J	

East has an awkward choice for an opening lead, so selects a *passive* trump lead rather than risk opening up a *frozen suit*. Now, the whole hand revolves around the play in Spades. If either defender were to lead the suit, North would be in Easy Street as he would be certain of making two Spade tricks (can you see *why*, though?) If declarer has to tackle the suit himself, however, he is going to lose two tricks in Spades to go with two losers in the minors. The best play in Spades, incidentally, is to lead low to the ♠Q and then low to the ♠10. On this layout that doesn't work. Unlucky. Note that the defenders must *exit passively* when they win tricks with the ♦K and the ♣A. A Spade lead at any time is fatal for the defence.

Hand 2 North-South game, dealer East

<p>♠ Q 5 3 ♥ 10 4 ♦ K 10 7 3 2 ♣ A J 4</p> <p>♠ K 7 6 ♥ K J 5 2 ♦ J 8 5 ♣ K Q 7</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ A 10 9 ♥ A Q 9 8 7 3 ♦ Q 6 ♣ 5 3</p> <p>♠ J 8 4 2 ♥ 6 ♦ A 9 4 ♣ 10 9 8 6 2</p>
	N										
W		E									
	S										

West	North	East	South
3NT	Pass	1♥	Pass
4♥ by East		4♥	All Pass
4♥ by East		Opening lead: ♠10	

South leads from his Club sequence against 4♥. Declarer covers with dummy's ♣Q and North wins the ♣A. Now then, North, what do you return? It may be tempting to switch to a Spade or a Diamond, but both of these suits are *frozen* in that the first side that leads the suit loses out by doing so. If North passively exits with trump or a Club, then declarer has to tackle the Spades and Diamonds himself. As long as the defenders are careful, they can make East lose a Spade, a Club and two Diamonds. If the defenders play on Diamonds then declarer has a discard for a Spade loser and if they play Spades, East doesn't have to lose a trick in that suit as the defence would set up a finesse position.

Hand 3 East-West game, dealer South

<p>♠ 10 9 8 4 ♥ J 9 3 ♦ A K Q ♣ J 10 9</p> <p>♠ J 3 ♥ A 8 6 5 ♦ J 10 9 ♣ K 7 4 2</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ 7 5 ♥ Q 10 7 ♦ 7 6 4 2 ♣ Q 8 6 3</p> <p>♠ A K Q 6 2 ♥ K 4 2 ♦ 8 5 3 ♣ A 5</p>
	N										
W		E									
	S										

West	North	East	South
Pass	3♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♣
4♣ by South		Opening lead: ♦J	

West leads a Diamond against 4♣ and, on seeing the dummy, may think he should have led something more dynamic. Not a bit of it! A Club lead would have allowed declarer to set up a second trick in the suit and a Heart lead would have given South a trick with the ♥K. Declarer has a certain Club loser and must make a Heart trick for his contract. With the actual lie of the cards this cannot be done unless the defence comes to the rescue. If either East or West leads a Heart South can make a trick in the suit. If not, then declarer will play a Heart to his ♥K followed by a Heart to the ♥J hoping that either East has the ♥A or West the ♥Q. Hard luck. Again, when the defenders are on lead, they must find easy *exit cards*.

Hand 4 Game all, dealer West

<p>♠ 7 4 2 ♥ Q 8 6 ♦ 9 8 5 4 ♣ K 5 3</p> <p>♠ A Q J 8 5 ♥ A 9 7 2 ♦ 3 ♣ J 10 8</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ K 10 9 6 3 ♥ K 10 5 ♦ K Q 10 ♣ A Q</p> <p>♠ None ♥ J 4 3 ♦ A J 7 6 2 ♣ 9 7 6 4 2</p>
	N										
W		E									
	S										

West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♥	Pass	6♣	All Pass
6♣ by West		Opening lead: ♦8	

West opens 1♠ and East punts a slam after an uncouth Blackwood enquiry. East leads the ♦8 to the ♦Q and South finds himself in difficulty at trick two, having won trick one with the ♦A. Let's help him. A passive trump exit would be nice, but South doesn't have one. A Diamond return into the jaws of dummy's ♦K 10 is out of the question. A Heart lead might just open up a frozen suit if partner has the ♥Q, so we are left with a Club return. Well, if declarer has the ♣K that gives nothing away and if North has it, the Club finesse is always working. So, the right defence is to return a Club and, of course, for North to withhold the ♣K. Declarer must lose a Heart now. That will teach East to bid like a lunatic!

§58. Example hands 5 to 8.

Hand 5 North-South game, dealer North

♠ 9 6 4 3 ♥ Q J 7 5 2 ♦ 9 8 5 ♣ A	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A K Q 5 ♥ A 9 ♦ A Q 10 ♣ J 9 6 4	♠ 7 2 ♥ 10 8 3 ♦ K 6 4 3 2 ♣ K 5 3
	N											
W		E										
	S											

West	North	East	South
	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass
3NT by East		Opening lead: ♦3	

East reaches 3NT and South leads a low Diamond from his long suit. That appears to cost a trick by giving East a cheap trick with his ♦10. However, what you lose on the swings... Declarer has to set up his Clubs for his extra trick (he can only see four Spades, two Hearts and two Diamonds on top) and the defenders have the all-important *tempo*. A Club lead from East will be won by North's ♣A and another Diamond lead clears the suit, leaving South with three Diamond winners. When East leads another Club, as he must, South can take that and cash the rest of his suit. North-South come to three Diamonds and two Clubs. East is helpless – he loses the race because he starts in second place.

Hand 6 East-West game, dealer East

♠ Q J 7 ♥ A Q J 8 ♦ 10 7 2 ♣ K 9 4	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 10 6 4 ♥ 9 ♦ Q 8 6 4 ♣ J 7 3 2	♠ 8 5 3 2 ♥ 5 3 ♦ K J 3 ♣ A 8 6 5
	N											
W		E										
	S											

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♥
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♥
4♥ by South		Opening lead: ♦4	

What do you lead from that West hand against 4♥ by South? It's awkward, and we will look more closely at opening leads later. However, there is no doubt what works on this deal and that is a Diamond lead. After the ♦4 lead, East-West can easily set up two Diamonds and two Aces for the defence and there's nothing South can do about it except grind his teeth in frustration. On any other lead South would have it easy. He would be able to draw trumps and set up a Spade trick in order to discard a Diamond loser from his hand. In this manner, declarer would be able to hold his losses to two Aces and one Diamond. After a Diamond lead, though, declarer loses the *tempo* and is helpless to avoid four losers.

Hand 7 Game all, dealer South

♠ A 5 2 ♥ A J 10 7 2 ♦ K J 10 5 ♣ 10	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 10 8 3 ♥ K 5 ♦ A 9 4 2 ♣ 9 8 4	♠ K 7 6 4 ♥ Q 9 6 3 ♦ Q 8 ♣ K J 3
	N											
W		E										
	S											

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	1♥	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	
4♥ by North		Opening lead: ♠3	

The bidding 1♥ – 3♥ – 4♥ is difficult to defend against as it isn't easy to know whether to be *passive* or *active*. What would you lead as East? The two realistic choices are a passive Club (the ♣8, second-highest from rubbish) or an attacking Spade, the ♠3. The red suits are strictly *verboten* with those holdings. On this deal it is a Spade lead that works as it enables the defenders to get a Spade trick going before North can find any way of discarding a loser. On a passive Club lead declarer could either get a Club trick set up for a Spade discard in hand or get his Diamonds set up for a Spade discard in dummy. The opening lead, though, is a *guess*.

Hand 8 Love all, dealer West

♠ 6 ♥ 9 8 6 3 2 ♦ K J 6 ♣ K J 5 2	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 10 9 5 4 2 ♥ A K J 4 ♦ None ♣ Q 10 6	♠ K 7 3 ♥ Q 7 ♦ A Q 8 5 2 ♣ 9 7 4
	N											
W		E										
	S											

West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♣	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass
4♥ by West		Opening lead: ♣2	

This is a deal where the defence have to get early tricks before the rats get at them. If they fail to take advantage of the *tempo* and find the right opening lead, however, then at least one loser would be discarded, and the contract would make. Here, a low Club lead from North will beat 4♠ (the defence has three Clubs and a slow trump trick) but any other lead allows West to play two rounds of trumps and either throw one Club away from his hand on the ♦A or dump a Club from dummy on his boss Hearts. Why should North lead a Club? A good question! The topic of opening leads is discussed in §59 and §60, but this is a tricky area of the game.