

Declarer play - Introduction

Standard Rules

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- Before playing a card from Dummy ask yourself the following questions:
 - Do I have enough to make my contract?
 - Always count your top winners and losers
 - Count your potential winners
 - What must be done to enable you to make your contract
 - Am I in danger of losing too many tricks?
 - Do you have any problems with communications or entries?
 - Has the bidding helped you to place any of the cards (honours and distribution)?
 - Has the lead indicated the placement of cards?
 - Do you need to keep one opponent off lead?
 - Are there any safety plays

Advice

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- If your only chance to make your contract hinges on certain cards to be in a certain position and to be in a certain length suit, then play on that requirement
 - You may have to combine many chances, so your planning **must** be made at trick 1.

Declarer's plan

After asking yourself the above questions, you should be able to make yourself a plan. For example:

1. How many sure winners have you got? (go through the suits systematically)
2. How many sure losers have you got?
3. Have I got sufficient entries to make all the winners?

4. How many more winners do you need?

5. Where can they come from?

6. Are there any problems?

Planning the play examples

1. Contract 4♠. Lead ♦K. East/West take the first 3 ♦ tricks then switch to ♣Q. Plan the play?

♠ AKQJ10	♠ 5432
♥ A	♥ KQJ
♦ 432	♦ 765
♣ K432	♣ A65

There are the following top tricks:

5 - ♠s
3 - ♥s
2 - ♣s

What could be simpler, 10 top tricks. What about point 6? Ah there is only one entry to the East hand. This entry must be preserved until the ♥A is unblocked, otherwise, you will not be able to make your ♥s in the East hand.

2. Practice for both declarer and defence.

East-West Vul; Dealer South

	♠ AQ1075	
	♥ KQ104	
	♦ 2	
	♣ 972	
♠ K2		♠ J984
♥ A9		♥ J87
♦ KQ963		♦ J54
♣ AQ85		♣ 1043
	♠ 63	
	♥ 6532	
	♦ A1087	
	♣ KJ6	

Contract 2♥ by North.

W	N	E	S
			P
1♦	1♠	P	1NT
2♣	2♥		

North-South will probably play in 2♥. A plus or small minus (-50) by North-South will be a good score.

3. Ruffing in the short hand

Both Vul; Dealer West; pairs

	♠ 842		
	♥ A8642		
	♦ QJ4		
	♣ Q3		
♠ 10965		♠ 3	
♥ J1097		♥ Q53	
♦ K7		♦ A86532	
♣ AK2		♣ J87	
	♠ AKQJ7		
	♥ K		
	♦ 109		
	♣ 109654		

W	N	E	S
P	P	P	1♠
P	2♥	P	2♠

1♠ opening silences the opposition, where 1♣ would give the opposition a chance to compete at the 1-level.

- points are evenly divided
- ♣s are poor

South should play at some level in ♠s.

If the first 3 players have PASSED then it is best for South to open 1♠, not the normal 1♣. If declarer plays a ♦ before trumps are extracted he may only make 7 tricks.

West plays a top ♣ and switches to a trump. Plan the play?

South should win and play a second ♣. West wins and might try another trump. Declarer can now win, cash the ♥K and ruff a ♣. The ♥A should be cashed, discarding a ♦ loser. Ten tricks are now there.

4. North-South Vul; Dealer North

♠ J972 ♥ KJ2 ♦ QJ764 ♣ 4	♠ AKQ ♥ Q876 ♦ 108 ♣ Q1092 ♠ 54 ♥ 93 ♦ K32 ♣ AK8765	♠ 10863 ♥ A1054 ♦ A95 ♣ J3
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Contract 3NT by North: Lead = ♥4

Although South does not appear to have sufficient points for game, he has such a good ♣ suit that 6 tricks are possible from that suit alone. Therefore he hopes that his partner can stop the major suits.

West wins the ♥ lead and returns the ♥J. Plan the play?

North needs to cover with the queen and a ♥ trick can be established due to the good intermediates. On a low ♦ switch, declarer must play the king. Therefore declarer will win 3 ♠s, 6 ♣s and either a ♥ or a ♦ (if allowed). If declarer doesn't cover the ♥J with the ♥Q he will lose the first 5 tricks. Note: the clubs are potentially blocked, play the 9 & 10 under the A, K.

5. Ruffing in the short hand unless help given in taking out the opposition's trumps

Both Vul; Dealer West; pairs

♠ 95 ♥ A982 ♦ J109 ♣ AJ98	♠ AQ102 ♥ KJ76 ♦ 32 ♣ K42 ♠ KJ73 ♥ 1054 ♦ KQ864 ♣ 6	♠ 864 ♥ Q3 ♦ A75 ♣ Q10753
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W	N	E	S
P	1NT	P	2♣*
P	2♥	P	P
P			

It is best to use Stayman on the South hand intending to pass any bid partner makes. It will be very rare that 1NT would be better than a suit contract.

Contract 2♥: by South; Lead = ♠6. Plan the play?

Win with the ♠K and play a ♣ towards the king, intending to ruff ♣s later on. In practice, West goes up with the ace and plays ♥A and another to try and cut down on declarer's ruffs. Declarer goes up with the ♥K and the ♥Q falls doubleton. Declarer now doesn't bother with ♣ ruffs. He takes out the trumps and leads ♦s towards the KQ. East foolishly went up with the ace and so declarer makes 10 tricks.

6. Allowing the defence to help

North-South Vul; Dealer East

		♠ K8543	
		♥ K8	
		♦ A643	
		♣ 84	
♠ AQ76			♠ J102
♥ AQ6			♥ 752
♦ QJ9			♦ K102
♣ Q93			♣ A765
		♠ 9	
		♥ J10943	
		♦ 875	
		♣ KJ102	

W	N	E	S
		P	P
1♠	P	1NT	P
2NT	P	3NT	

Contract 3NT by East: Lead = ♥J. Plan the play?

Prospects don't look good, but perhaps the defence will help!

The ♥K is probably wrong; perhaps you can arrange for North to have the lead so that your ♥Q is safe? Win with the ♥A.

Your best supply of tricks will be in ♠s so try to get to your hand and finesse the ♠s. Therefore you should lead the ♦9 to the ♦10 (obtaining at least one entry to the East hand). This is your lucky day when the ♦10 holds. However when you let the ♠J run to North he wins with the king. North now tries a ♣. Declarer can let this run to South's king (you need to make the ♣Q in order to make your contract). As expected South plays the ♥10. What do you play? If North did not have the ♥K would he have set up your ♣ trick. No he wanted his partner to get in and lead another ♥. OK we think North has the ♥K, so we must duck another ♥. If North started with a doubleton ♥K you will now make your contract: (3 ♠s, 2 ♥s, 2 ♦s and 2 ♣s). If North had started with Kxx then you can't ever make your contract. Ducking now reduces your loss (you make 8 tricks instead of 7).

7. Unblocking

West plays in a contract of 3NT. North leads high ♣s. West ducks the king of ♣s. He then ducks the queen of ♣s. North perseveres with the jack of ♣s and South shows out. Plan the play?

	♠ A974	
	♥ 5432	
	♦ 4	
	♣ KQJ10	
♠ K85		♠ J6
♥ AKQ		♥ J8
♦ KQ87		♦ A6532
♣ 953		♣ A762
	♠ Q1032	
	♥ 10976	
	♦ J109	
	♣ 84	

You will need to discard a ♦ (7 or 8) on the ace of ♣s so that when the ♦ suit is run, it is not blocked. So duck a third round of ♣s.

North is now snookered. Any lead will now result in the contract being made (3 ♥s, 5 ♦s and 1 ♣).

The ♠s are safe from an attack from the North hand, another reason to duck clubs. The ace of ♠s is the only other card which can win a trick for the defence.

8. Establishment of tricks

West plays in a contract of 4♠ on a ♣ lead. How should declarer play the contract? (Declarer is lucky that the lead wasn't a trump).

	♠ 965	
	♥ QJ2	
	♦ Q62	
	♣ KQJ10	
♠ AKQJ10		♠ 87
♥ 8753		♥ AK4
♦ 8753		♦ AK4
♣ -		♣ 65432
	♠ 432	
	♥ 1096	
	♦ J109	
	♣ A987	

The plan should be to ruff 4 ♣s in the West hand. Entries to the East hand are via the red suit ace-kings. The 87 of ♠s yield the tenth trick.

9. Establishment of tricks

East plays in a contract of 3NT on the ♥Q lead. How should declarer play the contract?

♠ K98	♠ AJ102
♥ 32	♥ AK
♦ A864	♦ K53
♣ KQ102	♣ J543

On counting tricks, at trick 1, you see that you have: 2-♠s, 2-♥s, 2-♦s and that you can force 3 ♣ tricks after losing to the ♣A. Since you can only lose the lead once, you must attack the ♣s straight away. You cannot afford to try the ♠ finesse.

10. Establishment of tricks

East plays in a contract of 3NT on the ♦6 lead, North plays the ♦Q. How should declarer play the contract?

♠ AQ2	♠ K753
♥ KQ53	♥ J102
♦ 2	♦ AK10
♣ KQ753	♣ J42

Win with the king and go to dummy on the ♠A. Now lead a ♣ towards the jack. If North has the ace and plays it, you are certain of four ♣ tricks unless there is a 5-0 split. If South has the ♣A he is not able to attack your ♦ suit. Therefore you have time to set up the ♣s for 9 tricks (at least).

Deal the North/South cards out randomly ensuring South has the ♦J.

11. Playing the odds – Danger hand

West plays in a contract of 3NT on the ♣J lead. Plan the play.

	♠ 98	
	♥ AQJ104	
	♦ 986	
	♣ J109	
♠ AK2		♠ Q753
♥ K2		♥ 753
♦ Q753		♦ AJ1042
♣ KQ42		♣ A
	♠ J1064	
	♥ 986	
	♦ K	
	♣ 87653	

If North has the ♦K there is no problem because your ♥ stop is safe and you have sufficient tricks to run. The problem occurs when South has the ♦K and North has the ♥A. Cash the ♦A first. Perhaps it will be a singleton.

12. Unblocking a suit

West plays in a contract of 3NT on a small ♣ lead. Plan the play.

♠ 864	♠ Q753
♥ 864	♥ AKQ
♦ AKQ42	♦ 9873
♣ J2	♣ A3

Win the trick. Test the ♦s. Cash the AKQ careful to unblock with the 987. There are no outside entries so you cannot afford to block the suit. If ♦s break 4-0 you can only pick up the suit if South holds the suit and they make the mistake of ducking the lead of the ♦8 from the East hand (after returning on a ♥).

13. Elimination & Throw-in

West plays in a contract of 4♥. North leads the ♠Q. Plan the play.

♠ A4	♠ 53
♥ AK864	♥ Q7532
♦ 753	♦ AQ10
♣ 753	♣ AKJ

Win the ♠ lead, take out trumps and exit in ♠s. The defence must open up a minor for you else give you a ruff and discard. Best they can do is play ♣s from the North seat. Take the finesse. If the worst happens, South wins with the ♣Q and returns a ♣. Cross to the West hand take the ♦ finesse. If this also loses, South must lead into your ♦ tenace or give a ruff and discard. Alternatively, duck the spade, at Trick 1, win the next round, take out trumps and take a ♦ finesse. South will be endplayed.

14. Playing on the correct side suit - Planning ahead

Playing pairs, West plays in a contract of 4♠. North leads the ♣Q. Plan the play.

♠ AJ982	♠ KQ763
♥ 2	♥ 1086
♦ KJ102	♦ Q3
♣ K53	♣ A42

Win the trick with the ♣K and take out trumps. Now knock out the ♦A. The losing ♣ will now be discarded on the established ♦. If you play on ♥s, the defence will knock out your ♣ guard before you have knocked out the ♦A. Playing on ♦s yields 11 tricks; playing on ♥s yields 10 tricks.

15. Playing the odds 36% + 50%

West plays in a contract of 3NT. North leads the ♥6. Your immediate problem is whether the ♥K will win. You put up the ♥K and it does win. Plan the play.

♠ 42	♠ AKQ3
♥ 753	♥ K2
♦ Q432	♦ AK5
♣ AQJ3	♣ 10942

You have 8 top tricks. You must first test the ♦s. If they break 3-3 you will have 9 tricks. If they do not break kindly, you can now take the 50% finesse in ♣s.

You should not play ♣s before ♦s.

16. Playing for your only chance of making the contract

West plays in a contract of 4♥. North leads the ♠K. You win and cash the ♥K, South dropping the ♥J. Plan the play.

♠ A4	♠ 32
♥ K753	♥ A1064
♦ A975	♦ 8642
♣ AQ10	♣ KJ9

You have 3 certain losers (1 ♠ and 2 ♦s) so you cannot afford to lose a trump. In order to pick up the ♥s for no losers, South must have QJ doubleton. So play for the only realistic hope. Cash the ♥A and the ♥10 and exit with a small ♦!

The defence can now:

- i. Take a ♠ before giving you a ruff and discard
- ii. Play a ♣ giving you a tempo, or
- iii. Help you to set up the ♦s

Whichever poison they use, you have time to set up the ♦ suit (assuming a 3-2 split) for 10 tricks.

17. Finessing

West plays in a contract of 4♠. North cashes 3♥ tricks and exits with a ♣. Plan the play.

♠ KQ10753	♠ A96
♥ 642	♥ 975
♦ 75	♦ AK
♣ AJ1092	♣ KQ

Win with the ♣K and cash the ♠K to cater for a 4-0 trump break. Now the trumps can be picked up for no losers thanks to the marked finesse. Only ♠J is to be found.

18. Finessing into the safe hand

West plays in a contract of 3NT. North leads a ♠. Plan the play.

♠ AK43	♠ Q2
♥ Q2	♥ AJ3
♦ KJ92	♦ A10753
♣ QJ3	♣ 542

Win the ♠Q. Cash the ♦A and take the ♦ finesse into the North (safe) hand. If North wins you always have a ♣ stop for the ninth trick. If you take the ♦ finesse the other way and South wins and plays ♣s you could be in trouble. Say you split your honours. North may win and lead a ♥. You now have to take the finesse for your ninth trick. Now if South wins with the ♥K. He will now attack the ♣s again, and if North started with the AKx(x) you will fail to make your contract.

19. Planning the hand – beware a ♦ ruff – ruffing finesse

West plays in a contract of 6♣. North leads the ♦4.

♠ KQ32	♠ -
♥ 32	♥ AJ4
♦ K1032	♦ AQJ9
♣ KQ3	♣ AJ10987

Win trick 1 with the ♦A (you will need to keep your entries to the West hand in reserve). Take out trumps. Overtake the ♦Q with the ♦K. Play the ♠K and discard ♥4, whether the king is covered or not. Win the return. Now play the ♦9 to the ♦10 and play the ♠Q discarding your other ♥ loser.

Be careful of a ♦ ruff, so you must take out trumps.

20. Elimination and throw-in

West plays in a contract of 6♥. North leads the ♣Q. You win with the ♣A and cash two top ♥s. South discards a small ♣ on the second round. Plan the play?

♠ AJ2	♠ K103
♥ A753	♥ K8642
♦ AQ2	♦ K75
♣ K76	♣ A5

You now have a trump loser. The minor suits don't present a problem. What are you going to do with the ♠ suit?

Eliminate the minor suits! Cash two top ♣s and ruff the third round. Now cash three rounds of ♦s. Now you are in a position to exit with a trump. If North had followed to three rounds of ♣s and three rounds of ♦s he must now set up the ♠s for you, by leading them or give you a ruff and discard.

If North's poison is to give you a ruff and discard, you discard a ♠ from one hand and ruff in the other. Alternately, if he leads ♠s you let the lead come round to the West hand. Now you can win, whether the queen is played or not.

21. Elimination and throw-in

West plays in a contract of 6♥. North leads the ♦K. Plan the play?

♠ K3	♠ AQ2
♥ AQ10953	♥ KJ42
♦ A	♦ J7
♣ AQ76	♣ 5432

The problem suit is ♣s. If you take the finesse you may lose two ♣ tricks (one can be discarded on the third round of ♠s). The best way to ensure against this occurring is to play on Elimination lines. Win the lead and take out trumps. Play three rounds of ♠s, discarding a ♣. Since the lead places the ♦Q with North, you can ensure that he is given the lead. Play the ♦J and discard another ♣. North wins but has to give you a ruff and discard or lead into your AQ tenace.

If a ♦ or ♠ is returned, you can ruff in the East hand and discard your ♣Q from the West hand.

22. Elimination and throw-in

West plays in a contract of 6♥. North leads the ♦K. Plan the play?

♠ K93	♠ A102
♥ AQ1053	♥ KJ942
♦ A2	♦ J7
♣ AK7	♣ Q32

You appear to have one ♠ and one ♦ loser. How can you improve your chances? If you play on ♠s you can only win three ♠s if there is QJ doubleton. So you must get the opposition to help. Win the lead and take out trumps. Cash three rounds of ♣s and exit in ♦s (jack). Now North will have to open the ♠ suit for you or give a ruff and discard.

If he plays a minor your ♠ loser can be discarded via a ruff and discard and you will make your slam. The other alternative is for him to lead a ♠. One of the defenders must play a honour (Q or J). You win and must now decide which opponent has the other outstanding honour. On the play of the cards to the previous tricks, declarer will have been able to get an idea how the suits are distributed. If no clues can be found you still have a 50% chance of guessing which defender has the outstanding honour. Mathematically you should play for split honours. Therefore you finesse, in ♠s, for the outstanding honour to be in the other hand to where the other honour was situated.

23. Finessing into the safe hand (safety play)

West plays in a contract of 3NT. North leads ♠J. Plan the play?

♠ AK3	♠ 542
♥ K53	♥ 42
♦ A42	♦ KQJ7
♣ AJ62	♣ K1073

You should duck the lead if South doesn't overtake with the queen. (You must keep South off lead because he may make the killing ♥ switch. If North switches to a ♣ or ♥ you can guarantee your contract. But he will probably play another ♠. Win, cash the ♦s (as long as they don't break worse than 4-2. Cash the ♣K(2) and play the ♣10. If it not covered let it run. If it wins you are in the correct hand to take another finesse for the queen. If North wins any of the ♣s he cannot attack ♥s from his side without giving you a trick. Therefore you will have time to make your contract: (2 ♠s, 4 ♦s and 3 ♣s).

24. Ducking (Rule of 11 and Rule of 7)

West plays in a contract of 3NT. North leads ♠6, South putting in the ♠Q. Plan the play?

♠ KJ9	♠ 842
♥ AK3	♥ J42
♦ J92	♦ AQ1053
♣ A753	♣ K6

The Rule of 11 shows that North has the A10. If you win with the king, North will have the A10 sitting over the J9. Now when you take the ♦ finesse, and it loses, your J9 will be swallowed up by the A10. He will then cash any other outstanding ♠s. However if you refuse to accept the easy first trick (Rule of 7), it will be safe to take the ♦ finesse later on.

After ducking the ♠, you can play the jack on the second round. It does not matter whether North wins this trick or not, you have a ♠ stop. If he wins he will not get back in until you have made your contract: (1 ♠, 2 ♥s, 4/5 ♦s and 2 ♣s). If he ducks and you take a losing ♦ finesse, the opposition will not be able to stop you making your contract. If South has a ♠ left to return, he has 3 ♠s and so North only has 4 ♠s. Therefore the defence can take 3 ♠s and 1 ♦, and you have 9 tricks. If ♠s break 5-2 then South will not have a ♠ to return, hence you will make your contract.

25. Planning ahead (refusing a finesse)

West plays in a contract of 5♦. North leads ♠3. Plan the play?

♠ 102	♠ AQ75
♥ AQ	♥ 753
♦ KQJ84	♦ 10975
♣ KJ102	♣ AQ

Win with the ace and commence taking out trumps. As long as trumps are not 4-0 you are home. When the defence win the ♦A and cash their ♠K, refuse the ♥ finesse if South switches to a ♥. Win with the ace. If a third ♠ is played, ruff high. Complete taking out trumps and cash 4 rounds of ♣s, discarding 2 ♥s from the East hand. Now a ♥ ruff in the short trump hand yields the 11th trick.

26. Planning ahead - Marked finesse (4-0 trump finesse)

West plays in a contract of 4♥. North/South cash the first three ♠ tricks and switch to a ♦. Plan the play?

♠ J32	♠ 1098
♥ AQ10432	♥ K95
♦ 2	♦ A753
♣ KQ2	♣ A75

You must cash the ♥A first to cater for a 4-0 trump break. Now you can pick up the Suit for no losers.

27. Planning ahead - Setting up your tricks

West plays in a contract of 3NT. North leads the ♥J. Plan the play?

♠ J102	♠ K43
♥ AK2	♥ Q3
♦ AQ102	♦ 8643
♣ AKQ	♣ J432

Win in the West hand. Cash three ♣ tricks and run the ♠J if it's not covered. Your ♥ entry allows you to cash J♣. You also have the tempo to make a ♠ trick before the opposition knock out your ♥ stops. Hence you come to 3 ♥s, one ♦, four ♣s and at least one ♠. You should not try to set up extra tricks in ♦s in case the outstanding cards are badly situated.

28. Trump Management - Leaving the boss trump out

West plays in a contract of 2♠. North leads the ♠2. Plan the play?

♠ A8642	♠ K53
♥ Q2	♥ 1093
♦ AQ52	♦ K83
♣ 53	♣ J1064

Win the trump and cash a second round. If trumps break 3-2, you should leave the boss trump out. Now play on ♦s.

If the outstanding ♦s break 3-3 then cash the 13th ♦. It does not matter if it is trumped. If it is you have 5 trump tricks and 3 ♦s. If it isn't you have 4 ♦s and 4 trumps.

If the ♦s break 4-2 and the third round is ruffed, you are now able to ruff your last ♦ with the last trump in dummy. You now have 5 trump tricks, 2 ♦s and a ruff.

29. Elimination - using a loser to force the correct hand to gain the lead

West plays in a contract of 4♠. North leads the ♥Q. Plan the play?

♠ AQJ86	♠ K7532
♥ 92	♥ K3
♦ AK2	♦ 103
♣ 532	♣ AQ108

From the lead you know that South has the ♥A. You must duck this trick to keep the ♥K for later use.

If the defence continue with ♥s (wrong), South will have to switch to ♠s or ♦s. You win the switch, take out trumps. Eliminate the ♦s and lead a ♣ towards dummy; covering North's card. South, winning, will now have to give you a ruff and discard or lead into the ♣s.

If the defence switch to a ♣ at trick 2 (best), you must win with the ace. Draw trumps, eliminate the ♦s and exit with the ♥K. South will now have to give you a 'ruff and discard' or lead into the ♣s ensuring another trick.

30. Planning ahead - Cross-ruffing after taking side suit winners

West plays in a contract of 7♥. North leads the ♣Q. Plan the play?

♠ A10864	♠ 2
♥ KQ104	♥ AJ95
♦ AQ3	♦ K42
♣ 5	♣ A7643

If you take out trumps you will only have 9 tricks. The only chance to make 13 tricks is to make your trumps separately (that is, cross-ruff). Before embarking on this line you must hope for a 4-3 ♦ break and cash 3 rounds of ♦s. When ♦s stand up you can cross-ruff the black suits. Your tricks are: 1-♠, 3-♦s, 1 ♣ and 8 trumps (via separate ruffs).

31. Planning ahead - Setting up a suit

West plays in a contract of 7♥. North leads a trump. Plan the play?

♠ A10864	♠ 2
♥ KQ104	♥ AJ95
♦ AQ3	♦ K42
♣ 5	♣ A7643

Your only hope, a very slender hope indeed, is that one of the black suits break 4-3, and that you can set up that suit for the 13th trick. Apart from the black suit splitting favourably, the trumps must break 3-2. Here we go at setting up the ♠ suit. (There are insufficient entries for setting up the ♣s.)

Win the trump lead with the ace. Play ♠A and ruff a ♠; small ♦ to the ace and ruff a ♠; small ♦ to the queen and ruff a ♠. Now trumps are exhausted in the East hand. You now have to cash a ♣ and ruff a ♣. You now have two top trumps in the West hand to take out trumps. Now you can cash your promoted ♠ and win the last ♦ in the East hand.

32. Trump Management - Catering for a 4-0 trump break in any hand

West plays in a contract of 4♥. North cashes the three top ♠s and switches to a ♣. Plan the play?

♠ 753	♠ 864
♥ AQ10975	♥ K83
♦ A	♦ 9753
♣ KQ5	♣ A64

You have 10 tricks if the trumps behave. You can allow for any 4-0 break by cashing the ♥A first. If both follow you have no trouble because they will fall to the three rounds of top trumps. However, if any defender shows out on the first round, you can pick up the suit by way of the marked finesse.

33. Trump Management - Catering for a 4-0 trump break

West plays in a contract of 4♥. North cashes the three top ♣s and switches to a ♦. Plan the play?

♠ KQJ2	♠ A3
♥ KQ864	♥ A953
♦ A	♦ 9753
♣ 975	♣ 864

You have 10 tricks if the trumps behave (3-1 or better). If the trumps break 4-0 you will lose a trump if North has them, but if South holds them, you can organise the play to pick up the suit for no losers. Therefore lead towards the ♥ ace; if North shows, out you can lead towards the KQ86 twice (via the ♠A) to pick up the suit.

34. Safety Play - Keeping the danger hand off-lead by ducking the initial lead

West plays in a contract of 4♥. North leads the ♠K. Plan the play?

♠ A3	♠ 86
♥ K10864	♥ AJ93
♦ KJ5	♦ AQ762
♣ K93	♣ 64

Even if you were to lose a trump you can win 10 tricks via 1 ♠, 4 ♥s and 5 ♦s. The only danger to this contract is that South leads a ♣ through your K93. You can and must ensure that South is not allowed to gain the lead to embarrass your ♣ holding. Therefore you should duck the initial ♠ lead. Win the continuation, go to the East hand on the ♥A and take the ♥ finesse (if South doesn't play the ♥Q). You can afford to lose a trump trick to North because he can't do any damage to your ♣ holding.

35. Using the opposition's bidding to advantage

West plays in a contract of 4♠ following a 3♣ pre-empt from North. North plays the three top ♣s, South following with the ♣Q and discards two small ♥s. Plan the play?

	♠ 952	
	♥ J7	
	♦ 10	
	♣ AKJ10762	
♠ AKQ108		♠ J3
♥ 64		♥ AK5
♦ A865		♦ J9432
♣ 83		♣ 954
	♠ 764	
	♥ Q109832	
	♦ KQ7	
	♣ Q	

The only way to make your contract is to bring in the ♦ suit. If ♦s break 2-2 you will have no problem. However you can expect them to break 3-1 due to the pre-empt. An extra chance is to pin the singleton 10. Take out trumps, they break 3-3 (say "thank you"!). Enter the East hand with a ♥ and play the ♦J, running it if it isn't covered. Of course you will play the ace if it is covered. Whichever, you will only lose one ♦.

36. Playing all of your chances

West plays in a contract of 6NT. North leads his 4th best ♠. Plan the play?

♠ AJ4	♠ K
♥ J54	♥ AK83
♦ AJ1076	♦ KQ93
♣ K5	♣ A642

You have 11 top tricks. Where is your 12th going to come from? ♥s certainly provide the best chance. So how should you tackle the suit?

First lay down the ♥A. Alas there is not a singleton queen. Now lead towards the ♥J. If the queen is with South you now make your contract. What if she is with the North hand? You have now lost your trick but all is not lost, ♥s may break 3-3 or when you run your ♦ suit it may embarrass the defenders. If North held four ♦s and South the ♠Q then who is going to cover the ♣s when the last ♦ is cashed?

♠ 10
♥ 10
♦
♣ Jxx

♠ AJ	♠
♥	♥8
♦ <u>6</u>	♦
♣ K5	♣ A642
♠ Qx	
♥	
♦	
♣ Qxx	

North can discard a ♠, but South has to discard a ♣. Now when the ♠A is cashed, North has to let go his boss ♥ or discard his ♣ protection. Whichever poison is chosen declarer comes to the rest of the tricks.

37. Trump Management - Ducking the trump lead

West plays in a contract of 6♥. North leads the ♥J. Plan the play?

♠3	♠ AKQ1097
♥ AKQ86	♥ 93
♦ J5	♦ AKQ62
♣ K10953	C-

If you were to win and play on trumps and if they did not split 3-3 you would not have a trump in dummy to ruff a ♣. So duck the lead. Now you have the ♣ suit protected. Win the continuation, take out trumps assuming they break 4-2 and set about cashing your ♠ winners, discarding ♣s. You may need to make one ♠ ruff to set the ♠ suit up. You are able to do this because you have a spare trump available. Entry to the East hand is via the ♦ suit.

38. Trump Management - Catering for a 4-0 trump break

West plays in a contract of 6♥. North leads the ♣Q. Plan the play?

♠ K3	♠ AQ82
♥ K9864	♥ A1073
♦ K874	♦ AQ6
♣ AK	♣ 53

With no losers in the side suits it's just a matter of not losing more than one trump. The only worry that you have is if one defender has all four trumps. You are not worried if trumps break 3-1 because you will only lose one trick. So play a small trump and if North follows, just cover. If North shows out, you can pick up South's trump holding for one loser. Try it by winning with the ace and attempting to finesse twice; or by putting in the 10 and allowing South to win this trick. You can then take the marked finesse. Whichever way guarantees the loss of only one trump trick.

39. Planning - Counting the opponent's points, and taking an early discard

West plays in a contract of 4♥ after North opened 1♦. North leads the ♣A followed by the ♣K and exits with a third ♣, South following throughout. Plan the play?

♠ 6543	♠ AK102
♥ AJ1073	♥ KQ92
♦ AQ	♦ 63
♣ J8	♣ Q43

Points missing:

- AK of ♣s
- KJ of ♦s
- QJ of ♠s

The only way that this contract can go down is if South has QJxx of ♠s, in which case you will need to discard a ♠ on the ♣. You will need the losing ♦Q to throw North in later. Take two rounds of trumps, the suit breaks 2-2. Cash the ♠A. Go back to the West hand on a trump and lead towards the A102 of ♠s. If North follows just cover, you now guarantee 3 ♠s. However North shows out on the second round. Now you must win, cash the ♦A and exit with the ♦Q. North will now be on lead to give you a 'ruff and discard' to dispose of the ♠ loser.

40. Planning ahead - making the best use of all your chances

West plays in a contract of 6♣. North leads the ♦J. Plan the play?

♠ A2	♠ QJ3
♥ K5	♥ A9763
♦ A2	♦ Q53
♣ AKQJ975	♣ 103

The opposition have made the only lead to cause problems. However all is not lost. The lead seems to indicate that the ♦K is with the South hand. However you may as well try the queen. Alas it fails. The ♦K does cover the ♦Q. You have 11 top tricks and only have to develop one extra trick. The chances of making an extra trick is if the ♥s break 3-3 or the ♠K is in the South hand. It is important that the play must follow the correct route otherwise you will not be able to try both chances.

Cash the ♣A, hopefully both follow. Now play ♥K (♥3) followed by ♥5 to the ♥A. Now play ♥6 and ruff high. If the ♥s break 3-3 you must now hope that trumps break 2-2. You can play a small trump to the ♣10 and if both defenders follow your two master ♥s can be used to allow discards from the West hand.

If ♥s don't break 3-3 or the ♣s don't break 2-2, you will need to take the ♠ finesse after entering the East hand on the ♣10.

41. Planning ahead - Keeping communications

West plays in a contract of 7NT. North leads the ♥7. Plan the play?

♠ A	♠ KQJ
♥ K	♥ AQ
♦ AKQ	♦ J1098765
♣ AKQ109875	♣ 3

You must win with the ace. Cash the ♥Q discarding ♠A. Now follow with the ♠KQJ discarding your ♦AKQ. Now you can cash your seven ♦ tricks, discarding everything except a boss ♣.

Who would have thought that the East hand would have won 12 tricks and the West hand one!

42. Throw in - Letting the opposition help you

West plays in a contract of 2NT. North leads the ♥Q. Plan the play?

♠ AJ104	♠ K62
♥ A2	♥ 53
♦ K53	♦ AQJ2
♣ J432	♣ KQ106

You have 7 top tricks. Should you guess the ♠ situation? Sneak a ♣ through? Or is there another line?

Win immediately. Take 4 rounds of ♦s and exit with a ♥. If ♥s break 5-4 (The usual probability), the opposition will have to lead ♠s guaranteeing your contract or set up the ♣s for you.

If ♦s break badly, then you will have to take a view on the ♠ situation!

43. Planning ahead - Combining chances for your contract - Dummy reversal

West plays in a contract of 6♣. North leads the ♥A and continues with a small ♥. Plan the play?

♠ KJ75	♠ A62
♥ K753	♥ J
♦ 3	♦ AKQ75
♣ QJ75	♣ AK32

You have 10 top tricks, so need two ruffs for your contract. The worry is a 4-1 trump split. Win with the ♥K discarding a ♠. Lead a ♦ to the ace and ruff a ♦ with the ♣5. Cash ♣Q and play a ♣ to the ace.

If both defenders have followed to two rounds of ♣s you are home. You can now ruff another small ♦ high and enter dummy with the ♠A to draw trumps (2 ♠s, 1 ♥, 3 ♦s, 2 ruffs and 4 trumps).

If the ♣s break 4-1, play a ♣ to the jack. Enter the East hand via the ♠A and cash the master trump. Now cash your master ♦s. If they break 4-3 you are OK but if they also break badly you still have the ♠ finesse available.

Notes:

- i. It is not a hand for a cross-ruff (your trumps are too small)
- ii. It is tempting to ruff ♥s in the East hand but there are insufficient entries.
Try it!

44. Trump Management - Timing the hand - Discarding losers before tackling trumps

West plays in a contract of 4♠. North leads the ♥K. Plan the play?

♠ 10965	♠ 8743
♥ 10753	♥ A
♦ AKQ3	♦ J42
♣ 3	♣ AKQ42

You should immediately lead trumps. However the defenders will win and lead another ♥. You must now ruff.

You cannot afford to continue with trumps now. If you do, the defenders will cash two ♥s after taking out trumps for you, since the East hand does not have any trumps left.

You must now cash two rounds of ♣s, discarding a ♥. You should now enter the West hand with a ♦ and ruff the last ♥. It is now safe for you to continue to play on trumps.

45. Planning - Establishing your tricks

West plays in a contract of 2NT. North leads a small ♣. Plan the play?

♠ AK3	♠ 8742
♥ 1093	♥ QJ2
♦ A753	♦ K42
♣ K53	♣ AQ2

You have seven tricks and only require one more. Although it may be tempting to play for a 3-3 split in either ♠s or ♦s you will not have enough time to establish your eighth trick if the suit doesn't break kindly.

You should immediately play on ♥s. If you start at trick 2, the defence can't stop you establish a trick in ♥s.

46. Playing the odds

West plays in a contract of 3NT. North leads ♠6. South wins with the ace and returns the ♠9. Plan the play?

♠ K10	♠ J42
♥ AK75	♥ 642
♦ K10953	♦ AJ8
♣ AK	♣ Q642

From the initial two tricks it seems that North has five ♠s. (If they were 4-4, there would not be a problem). Since North has longer ♠s it seems reasonable for South to have longer ♦s. Therefore, declarer should win the second trick, cash two

♣s and two ♥s, and enter the East hand with the ♦ ace. Now the ♣Q can be cashed before taking the ♦ queen finesse in the South hand. Note you must play/run the ♦J and it if it not covered. Now you can use the ♦8 for another finesse. If you had led the ♦8 on the second ♦ trick the suit would be blocked if South plays the queen.

47. Trump Management - Safety play on trumps

West plays in a contract of 4♠. North leads a small ♥. Plan the play?

♠ AK932	♠ 1054
♥ AKQ	♥ 432
♦ AK	♦ 8642
♣ 753	♣ A64

If trumps break 3-2 there is no problem. You will lose two ♣s and a trump. However when trumps are 4-1 in the South hand, you can pick up the suit for one loser only! You will lose two tricks if there is a 4-1 split in the North hand unless South has a singleton honour, hence cashing the ace first.

Cash the ♠A and lead towards the ♠10. When South wins, he is left with Qx of ♠s. The ♣A is the entry to take the marked finesse in ♠s.

48. Safety play - Keeping the danger hand off lead

West plays in a contract of 3NT. North leads a ♦5 and South inserts the queen. Plan the play?

♠ A53	♠ K864
♥ QJ432	♥ A5
♦ AJ6	♦ 3
♣ Q9	♣ AK1086

With 7 top tricks, you can afford to lose a ♣ trick to the North hand. Play a ♠ to the king and lead a small ♣ towards the Q9. If the South hand plays small, try the ♣9. You can now pick up any 4-1 ♣ break, and when South has 4 ♣s to the jack you don't lose any ♣ tricks or your contract. If North wins the first ♣ trick and exits with a black suit, you will have to fall back on the ♥ finesse.

49. Trump management - Safety play on trumps

West plays in a contract of 6♠. North leads a ♥Q. After winning with the ace you lead a trump and South plays the queen. Plan the play?

♠ AKJ4	♠ 9863
♥ 432	♥ A
♦ A52	♦ QJ3
♣ Q108	♣ AKJ53

If declarer is greedy and wins with the king, ruffs a ♥, comes to hand on a trump to ruff another ♥. When he now returns to hand on a ♣ to take out trumps the defenders will win a trump trick (trumps being 4-1) and play another ♥ to defeat the contract.

Look what happens if the declarer lets the ♠ queen win. Assuming South plays a ♦, best play, declarer can win with the ace, ruff a ♥; return on a trump to ruff the last ♥. Now a ♣ to the queen allows declarer to take out trumps and claim (3 ♠s, 2 ♥ ruffs, 1 ♥, 1 ♦ and 5 ♣s).

50. Playing the odds - Combining your chances

West plays in a contract of 6NT. North leads a ♥J. Plan the play?

♠ J10943	♠ AK2
♥ KQ	♥ A3
♦ KJ32	♦ AQ4
♣ A9	♣ J10864

Win the ace and cash a top ♠. If the ♠Q was singleton you have no more worries. However it probably doesn't. So now you have to hope for a doubleton or singleton ♣ honour in the South hand.

Lead a small ♣ and insert the nine if South doesn't play an honour. When this loses (most probable) you must win the ♥ return and pray for a minor miracle. Cash the ♣A. If the second honour appears you now have sufficient tricks (2 ♠s, 2 ♥s, 4 ♦s and 4 ♣s). However if the second ♣ honour does not appear you must rely on the ♠ finesse. Play the ♠J and run it if it isn't covered. Now if North has Qxx or Qx, you have sufficient tricks (5 ♠s, 2 ♥s, 4 ♦s and 1 ♣s).

51. Trump Management - Allowing for a 4-1 trump split - Cutting communications

Playing teams-of-four, West plays in a contract of 4♠. North leads a ♦K. Plan the play? When you win and draw two rounds of trumps, North turns up with a singleton ♠9 and discards ♦2 on the second round.

♠ AKQ32	♠ 765
♥ KQ92	♥ A53
♦ J9	♦ A4
♣ A9	♣ J8642

At trick 1 you see that the contract is certain if trumps break 3-2. Therefore you should assume that they will break 4-1!

You must duck the first ♦, cutting communications. Win the continuation and set about trumps. After two rounds of trumps, you find North turns up with a singleton ♠9 and discards ♦2 on the second round. You must now aim to ensure that you ruff

the 4th round of ♥s and ensure that South doesn't ruff your master ♥s. Therefore you must attack ♥s in a specific order. Cash the king, go to the ace in dummy and lead a third round towards Q9. If South ruffs, he will be ruffing a loser, for you will play the nine. If he follows suit or discards, you win the third ♥ and ruff the 4th round of ♥s in dummy. It matters not whether South overruffs for you cannot be denied making your contract.

52. Allowing for a bad split - Playing a suit to best advantage

West plays in a contract of 3NT. North leads a ♠Q. Plan the play?

♠ A32	♠ K65
♥ K92	♥ A53
♦ QJ43	♦ A762
♣ A93	♣ K65

Having seven top tricks you can only develop others in ♦s. Play the ♦ ace, hoping for a singleton king, and low towards the QJ. If South follows to the second round of ♦s then if North wins, the suit has split 3-2 and you will make your contract. If after playing the jack North shows out, you return to the East hand to lead towards the queen. Again you must make 3 ♦s tricks and hence nine for your contract.

53. Allowing for a bad split - playing a suit to best advantage

West plays in a contract of 6NT. North leads a ♠J. Plan the play?

♠ A32	♠ KQ5
♥ K92	♥ AQ3
♦ QJ43	♦ A762
♣ AQ3	♣ K65

Cash the ♦ ace in case there is a singleton king. When the king doesn't fall and the suit breaks 3-2 you have no worries. You can lose 1 trick only so you will make your contract. However if ♦s break 4-1 with North holding K10xx you cannot make your contract. The important situation occurs when South has K10xx. You must now lead towards QJ4 twice. You have sufficient entries to go back to the East hand to lead towards the ♦ honours. However South defends, he cannot stop you making three ♦ tricks.

54. Safety play - Finessing into the safe hand

West plays in a contract of 3NT. North leads a ♠Q. Plan the play?

♠ A32	♠ K54
♥ 92	♥ K4
♦ AQ43	♦ KJ62
♣ AJ73	♣ K1065

You have been lucky not to have received a ♥ lead. Now your contract is secure if approached correctly. Win the ♠ lead and cash four ♦ tricks. Now play the ♣A and take the finesse of the queen into the South hand. You don't mind losing to the queen in the South hand because he can't hurt your delicate ♥ holding. You now have your nine tricks secured (2 ♠s, 4 ♦s and 3 ♣s).

55. Trump Management - ruffing in the short trump hand

West plays in a contract of 6♣. North leads ♠J. Plan the play?

♠ AK	♠ Q32
♥ 32	♥ AQJ75
♦ AJ84	♦ 3
♣ AJ732	♣ Q1054

You have 9 certain tricks (3 ♠s, 1 ♥, 1 ♦ and 4 ♣s assuming a decent split) so you need to somehow make another 3. You must ensure that you get 3 ruffs in the East hand.

Win the ♠ lead, cash the ♦A and ruff a ♦ low. Return to the West hand via a second ♠ and ruff another ♦ low. Now cash the ♠Q, discarding a ♥. Now you can cash the ♥A and ruff a ♥. Ruff your last ♦ with a high ♣. Now play East's last ♣ and run it unless covered.

Provided no one over-ruffs an early ♦ ruff and returns a trump, you will make your contract.

You cannot afford to take the ♣ finesse in case it loses and a trump is returned. You could not now make 12 tricks without taking the risky ♥ finesse. You can afford to lose a trump trick to the king but cannot chance losing any other trick.

56. Safety play - Finessing into the safe hand

West plays in a contract of 4♠. North leads ♦Q. Plan the play?

	♠ 3	
	♥ 9876	
	♦ QJ1092	
	♣ AQJ	
♠ AKJ82		♠ 754
♥ QJ5		♥ AK104
♦ 84		♦ AK3
♣ K62		♣ 854
	♠ Q1096	
	♥ 32	
	♦ 765	
	♣ 10973	

Win and play a ♠, just covering South's card. This caters for 4 trumps to the Q10 in the South hand. If the North hand wins with a singleton trump he cannot attack your delicate ♣ holding. Whatever the return, win and cash the ♠A. This will reveal any bad trump break. If trumps are split 4-1 you will now be able to pick up South's other trumps without loss. If North has 4 trumps to the Q you will have to lose two trumps. Therefore you will now have to hope that the ♣A is in the South hand.

57. Trump Management - Dummy reversal after playing for Qx of ♣s

West plays in a contract of 6♦. North leads ♥K and continues with the queen. Plan the play?

♠ AQJ3	♠ K4
♥ 5	♥ 7642
♦ AJ1072	♦ KQ5
♣ AJ4	♣ K852

You have 11 top tricks and only need to develop one more. You could play for a dummy reversal, ruffing 3 ♥s in the West hand. However you have one extra chance, cash the ♣AK first to see if the ♣Q drops. If it does you are home by drawing trumps and cashing your tricks. If the ♣Q does not drop you can still fall back on your dummy reversal plan.

After two rounds of ♣s you will be in the East hand to ruff the third ♥. You can then use the ♠K as an entry for a ruff of the fourth ♥. As long as the trumps break 3-2 you can still take out trumps and cash your 12 winners.

58. Planning the hand at trick 1

West plays in a contract of 4♥, North overcalled your 1♥ opening with 2♣. North leads ♣Q. Plan the play?

♠ K42	♠ A65
♥ KQ1086	♥ J754
♦ A4	♦ K75
♣ K75	♣ A64

You have the following losers: 1 ♠, 1 ♥ and 1 ♣. You also have 10 winners, what could be simpler? Since North has overcalled in ♣s and without the AK he must have length in ♣s. There is also a good chance of North having the ♥A, hence an excellent chance of giving South a ruff.

The best way to avoid another loser is to play North for no more than 6 ♣s. Therefore you should win with the ♣A and play on trumps. When North wins the first round he can give his partner a ruff in ♣s but South will only be ruffing a loser; for you can play a losing ♣ from both hands if South ruffs, or you can win and draw trumps, if South declines to ruff.

59. Playing all of your chances - Playing for split honours or setting up a side suit

West plays in a contract of 6♥. North leads ♠Q. Plan the play?

♠ K42	♠ A6
♥ KQJ1086	♥ A5
♦ 4	♦ AQ862
♣ 1098	♣ AQ65

There are two ways of playing this contract. You have 10 top tricks and an eleventh can be taken by a ♠ ruff; how best to produce the twelfth?

i. Play for split honours

Take a double finesse in ♣s twice. Assuming that the outstanding honours split, you will only lose one ♣ trick. You don't even need to chance the ♠ ruff as long as the ♣s behave

ii. Set up the ♦ suit

Win the lead in the West hand and take the ♦ finesse. Let's assume that it loses to the king. Win the ♠ return, cash the ♥ ace and ruff a ♦. Now you can take your ♠ ruff and follow with another ♦ ruff. Assuming ♦s have broken 4-3 (most probable), you take out trumps and use dummy's ♣A as an entry to the established ♦s for two ♣ discards

The second method is slightly superior because even if the ♦s don't break favourably, you can still fall back on the finesse of the king of ♣s

60. Safety play - Keeping the danger hand off-lead - Finessing into the safe hand

West plays in a contract of 3NT. North leads ♠Q. Plan the play?

♠ AK4	♠ 32
♥ K4	♥ 65
♦ AQ54	♦ KJ32
♣ AJ92	♣ K654

You have 8 top tricks and can safely produce at least one more in ♣s. The danger with this hand is not to let South get the lead for he may switch to a ♥. You should therefore, start by ducking the lead. North can't do you any damage so let him win the first trick but win the continuation. On a good day he will switch to a ♣ giving you an overtrick. However he will probably continue ♠s. You now go to the ♣K and finesse for the ♣Q by inserting the nine. If North wins you have 9 tricks. However if the nine holds, you can go to the East hand via ♦s and take the finesse of the ♣ queen again making an overtrick.

61. Safety play - keeping the danger hand off-lead - ducking the original lead - Finessing into the safe hand

West plays in a contract of 4♠. North leads ♦K. Plan the play?

♠ KQJ108	♠ A976
♥ K4	♥ 653
♦ 754	♦ A2
♣ A32	♣ KJ109

You have 8 top tricks and can ruff a ♦ for a ninth. A tenth can be developed safely in ♣s if you take the correct precautions. You cannot allow the South hand to get the lead, because he could lead a ♥ through your Kx allowing North to win his AQ, so you must duck the opening lead. Win the continuation; take out trumps ending in the West hand. Ruff the ♦ in dummy and run the ♣J if it is not covered. Even if you lose to the ♣Q in the North hand the defence can't take more than 1 ♥, 1 ♦ and 1 ♣.

62. Trump Management - Keeping trump control

West plays in a contract of 4♠. North leads ♠2, the defence taking the first two ♣ tricks and continues ♣s. Plan the play?

♠ K765	
♥ 98	
♦ 1065	
♣ QJ72	
♠ AQJ108	♠ 932
♥ AK4	♥ 765
♦ AQ3	♦ KJ42
♣ 108	♣ 654
♠ 4	
♥ QJ1032	
♦ 987	
♣ AK93	

If you ruff you are down to four trumps in the West hand, and can't afford to be forced in the West hand again. So long as you allow the trump king to win whilst you still have the ♠9 in dummy, you can take care of another ♣ lead. Therefore you should ruff the ♣ and exit with the ♠Q. Even if trumps break 4-1 you can manage 10 tricks.

With four trumps to the king, a good defender will duck twice. Now you can't afford to play another round. You must now cash the two ♥ tricks and play on ♦s hoping that the hand with four ♠s also has three ♦s. On the fourth ♦ you discard your ♥ loser; if the defender ruffs, his king will now fall under your ace.

63. Trump management - Declining to take out trumps

West plays in a contract of 4♠. North leads ♥J. Plan the play?

♠ KQJ1098	♠ A6
♥ K864	♥ A53
♦ QJ4	♦ 6532
♣ -	♣ AJ53

You have at least two ♦s and one ♥ to lose, and have only 9 top tricks. How do you come to the tenth?

You could lead up to the QJ of ♦s twice hoping for split honours or you could play for ♥s to be 3-3 or you could aim to ruff a fourth round of ♥s in the short trump hand. So the ♥s have two chances. Let's go for them.

Win the ♥ lead in dummy, cash the ♣A discarding a ♦ and lead another ♥ to the king. Now exit with a third round. Even if the ♥s break 4-2 and the defence lead trumps you can win in hand and ruff a ♥ with the ♠A. The only further tricks that the defence can now win are the two ♦s.

64. Trump management - Ruffing in the short-trump hand or setting up a side suit?

West plays in a contract of 4♠. North leads ♦A, South follows with the nine (suit preference for ♥s), and North switches to the ♥2. South wins with the ace and returns a ♥7. Plan the play?

	♠ J95	
	♥ J62	
	♦ A108652	
	♣ 94	
♠ K107643		♠ AQ2
♥ K4		♥ 10853
♦ J72		♦ 4
♣ J5		♣ AK863
	♠ 8	
	♥ AQ97	
	♦ KQ93	
	♣ Q1072	

W	N	E	S
			1♦
2♠	4♦	4♠	

West can now see 9 tricks. How best to make the tenth? Are there any snags?

- Ruff a ♦

Ruff a ♦ and cash the AQ of ♠s, South discarding the ♦3. You can now read the South hand for 1-4-4-4. (On the lead South played the ♦9 signifying an even number. It must be 4 since North raised the suit.) Now there is great difficulty getting back to hand to extract the last trump. If you lose a trick getting back to hand the defence will cash a ♦! So cashing two rounds of ♣s and ruffing a ♣ is out because North will overruff. Look what happens when you exit with a ♥ and discard your losing ♦ (loser on a loser). South will probably win with the queen. If he continues

with a ♥ his partner makes the ♠J en passant but if he switches to a small ♣ you can insert the jack and draw trumps. (South could still have beaten the contract by switching to the ♣Q but that is double dummy)

- Set up the ♣ suit

Win the ♥ continuation, cash ♣AK and ruff a ♣ with the ♠10. North is in a dilemma. If he overruffs and forces dummy with a ♦ (best), declarer ruffs another ♣ with the ♠K and takes out trumps with dummy's ♠AQ. Now the boss ♣ is ready to be cashed for a ♦ discard. 10 tricks are now in the bag

65. Trump management - ruffing in the short hand

West plays in a contract of 4♥. North leads ♣J. Plan the play?

♠ K432	♠ Q5
♥ AK95432	♥ J107
♦ 4	♦ QJ753
♣ 4	♣ AQ3

The ♣K will surely be wrong so your best chance of extra tricks are with ♠ ruffs. Aim for two ♠ ruffs. Win with the ♣A and exit with the ♠Q. The defence will win but cannot stop you getting two ♠ ruffs with the ♥J10. Even if the defence overruff you on the third round and returns a trump you can still get another ruff. So you only lose ♠A, ♦A and the ♥Q. You will probably make 11 tricks.

66. Keeping the danger hand off-lead - elimination and throw-in

West plays in a contract of 4♥. North leads ♠K. Plan the play?

	♠ KQJ2	
	♥ -	
	♦ KJ87	
	♣ 87642	
♠ 65		♠ A1043
♥ KQ8642		♥ AJ103
♦ AQ4		♦ 532
♣ AJ		♣ 53
	♠ 987	
	♥ 975	
	♦ 1098	
	♣ KQ109	

You have nine top tricks and need to organise for the defence to give you the tenth.

You do not want the South hand to gain the lead in case he switches to a ♦, so you must duck the first trick. North will probably continue ♠s. You win and ruff a ♠ high. Next you lead a trump to the ♥10. Now lead a ♣ and put in the jack. North will probably win and continue ♠s. You win with the ace and lead a second round of trumps to the ♥J (cash a third with the ace if they split 3-0).

You are now in with an excellent chance. If North has the last boss ♠ you can play the ♠10 and discard the ♦4. North wins and has to lead into the ♦ tenace or give you a 'ruff and discard', allowing your ♦ queen to be discarded.

If South had turned up with the ♣KQ or four ♠s then you would still be able to take the ♦ finesse. However there were very good chances of making the elimination and throw-in play.

67. Safety play - Keeping the danger hand off-lead - Allowing the safe hand to win a trick

West plays in a contract of 4♥. North leads ♣Q. Plan the play?

♠ 65	♠ K43
♥ KJ109	♥ AQ43
♦ KJ1053	♦ A94
♣ K2	♣ A53

Win the lead with the ace and take out trumps (if 3-2). Now play the ♦K and play another towards the A9, inserting the nine unless the queen shows up from the North hand. It does not matter if South wins with the ♦Q because he can't hurt your ♠ holding. Whatever is returned, you can unblock the ♦s and get to the West hand for the other ♦ winners. You will win 4 ♥s, a ♣ ruff, 4 ♦s and 2 ♣s for 11 tricks.

68. Trump Management - Catering for a 4-0 trump break

West plays in a contract of 6♠. North leads ♣Q. Plan the play?

♠ K9865	♠ A1073
♥ A2	♥ KQ53
♦ KJ53	♦ AQ4
♣ AK	♣ 53

What a lovely contract. There are plenty of top tricks so what could go wrong?

The only danger is a 4-0 trump break! Win the ♣ lead and play a small trump from the West hand and cover any card played. If North plays the ♠2, play small from the East hand. If the South hand wins then the suit has split 3-1 at worst and your ♠AK will pick up the remaining trumps. If North had started with QJ42 you will be able to finesse for one honour, hence only losing to the other honour. If North had showed out on the first round, you must win with the ace and finesse on the second round. Again you will only lose to one honour.

69. Trump Management - Playing on a cross-ruff

West plays in an ambitious contract of 4♠. North makes the good lead of the ♠6. Plan the play?

		♠ 86	
		♥ AJ653	
		♦ KQ5	
		♣ 853	
♠ QJ952			♠ A1074
♥ Q842			♥ -
♦ 7			♦ J9864
♣ A106			♣ KQ72
		♠ K3	
		♥ K1097	
		♦ A1032	
		♣ J94	
W	N	E	S
		1♦	P
1♠	P	2♠	P
4♠			

Although North may be leading from the Kxx of ♠s it is more likely that South has the singleton ♠K, so win with the ♠A. You need to start a cross ruff to make your contract so give up a ♦. The defence will win and surely play a second round of trumps but they can't stop you making your contract on a cross ruff and setting up your ♦s. Declarer can make 11 tricks (4 ♣s, 1 ♦, 1 trump and 5 ruffs).

70. Establishment of tricks

West plays in a contract of 3NT. North leads ♥Q. Plan the play?

♠ AJ102	♠ K64
♥ AK	♥ 64
♦ QJ75	♦ K1092
♣ A53	♣ K762

You have six top tricks and can force three more in ♦s. Force out the ace by immediately playing on ♦s while you have all suits protected.

If you attack ♠s and lose to the queen, you will lose the second ♥ stop before you have set up your nine tricks.

71. Establishment of tricks

West plays in a contract of 3NT. North leads ♥Q. Plan the play?

♠ Q64	♠ KJ532
♥ AK	♥ 64
♦ QJ105	♦ K42
♣ AJ53	♣ KQ2

If ♠s split 3-2 you could make 10 tricks if you knocked out the ♠A immediately. However if they break 4-1 you will go down in a lay down contract. Play on ♦s for a certain game contract. If the defence hold up the ♦A twice, switch to ♠s for overtricks. Even if the ♦ ace isn't played on the first round of the suit you could switch your attack to ♠s. If they break favourably you will make overtricks. Even when they break 4-1 you will guarantee your contract.

72. Establishment of tricks

West plays in a contract of 3NT. North leads ♠Q. Plan the play?

♠ AK2	♠ 43
♥ 432	♥ AQJ5
♦ KQ4	♦ J32
♣ AKJ3	♣ Q642

You have seven top tricks (2 ♠s, 1 ♥ and 4 ♣s). You can guarantee your contract by playing on ♦s. However if the ♦A is not played on the first two rounds you must run for your contract. Cash all your winners for nine tricks.

Another way to play is:

- Duck the initial ♠ lead to cut opposition's communications
- Win the continuation and play the ♦K. If it is ducked take the ♥ finesse. Even if this loses you still have nine certain tricks. If it wins you can go to the West hand again, via ♣s, and take the ♥ finesse again. If it wins again and the suit breaks 3-3 you will make overtricks

73. Trump Management - Discarding losers before tackling trumps

South leads the $\heartsuit K$ against East's $2\heartsuit$ contract. Plan the play?

	\spadesuit 107642 \heartsuit A10 \diamondsuit 1095 \clubsuit A98	
\spadesuit AK83 \heartsuit J5 \diamondsuit 832 \clubsuit 7542	\spadesuit J95 \heartsuit 743 \diamondsuit KQJ6 \clubsuit KJ3	\spadesuit Q \heartsuit KQ9862 \diamondsuit A74 \clubsuit Q106

The bidding ought to be:

W	N	E	S
	P	$1\heartsuit$	P
$1\spadesuit$	P	$2\heartsuit$	P
P	P		

Win and overtake the $\spadesuit Q$, discarding a \diamondsuit , then tackle trumps. The defence will probably force you to ruff a \diamondsuit . You can now complete the task of taking out trumps.

74. West leads $\spadesuit K$ against South's $4\heartsuit$. Plan the play?

Dealer East: East-West vulnerable

	\spadesuit 743 \heartsuit 8542 \diamondsuit AKQ \clubsuit 432	
\spadesuit KQJ105 \heartsuit A9 \diamondsuit J102 \clubsuit 1096	\spadesuit A92 \heartsuit KQJ1063 \diamondsuit 3 \clubsuit KQJ	\spadesuit 86 \heartsuit 7 \diamondsuit 987654 \clubsuit A875

The bidding ought to be:

W	N	E	S
		P	1♥
P	2♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Win and play three rounds of ♦s, discarding two ♠ losers. Now tackle trumps. You will only lose a ♣ and a trump.

75. Trump Management - discarding a loser before tackling trumps

North leads the ♦ 6 against West's 4♠. Plan the play?

Dealer South: Both vulnerable

	♠ A5	
	♥ QJ10	
	♦ 7654	
	♣ A1032	
♠ KQJ106		♠ 98432
♥ A96		♥ K43
♦ K2		♦ QJ8
♣ KQ7		♣ 64
	♠ 7	
	♥ 8752	
	♦ A1093	
	♣ J985	

You have four losers so need to get rid of the heart loser, on a ♦, before touching trumps as that gives the defence time to knock out the ♥ stops

76. Setting up a winner to discard a loser

Dealer West: Both non-vulnerable

	♠ Q76	
	♥ K9865	
	♦ AQ	
	♣ A64	
♠ KJ543		♠ A1082
♥ A		♥ 10
♦ 9864		♦ K1053
♣ Q82		♣ J1093
	♠ 9	
	♥ QJ7432	
	♦ J72	
	♣ K75	

The bidding ought to be:

W	N	E	S
P	1♥	P	4♥

East leads the ♣J. A ♣ discard is needed on a ♦, so you must win with ♣A. Cash the ♦A and exit with the ♦Q. Now when you win the ♣K, you can get a ♣ discard on the ♦J. You will then lose: 1 ♠, 1 ♥ and 1 ♦.

78. Setting up a winner for a discard before taking out all of opponent's trumps

Dealer East: Both vulnerable

	♠ A10642	
	♥ Q109	
	♦ 943	
	♣ A10	
♠ 8		♠ QJ3
♥ KJ764		♥ A8532
♦ A52		♦ K86
♣ KJ86		♣ Q3
	♠ K975	
	♥ -	
	♦ QJ107	
	♣ 97542	

The bidding ought to use Jacoby 2NT* agreeing trumps and game forcing:

W	N	E	S
		1♥	
2NT*		4♥	

On a ♦ lead, you need to win with ♦K and play on ♣s. Now you can get a ♦ discard on the promoted ♣s.

79. Setting up a winner by ruffing out losers in the short hand

Dealer South: Both non-vulnerable

	♠ 3	
	♥ 9864	
	♦ AJ43	
	♣ AQ64	
♠ K1075		♠ Q98
♥ KQJ		♥ 10
♦ 852		♦ Q1096
♣ 1087		♣ KJ953
	♠ AJ642	
	♥ A7532	
	♦ K7	
	♣ 2	

The bidding ought to be:

W	N	E	S
			1♠
	2♣		2♥
	4♥		

West leads trumps. You need to ruff spades in the North hand using ♦K and minor suit ruffs to create entries for 3 spade ruffs.

80. Ruffing out losers in the short-hand

Dealer West: North-South vulnerable

	♠ KJ87	
	♥ Q106	
	♦ J1098	
	♣ Q9	
♠ Q106		♠ 3
♥ AK9742		♥ J53
♦ A76		♦ KQ42
♣ 8		♣ AJ752
	♠ A9542	
	♥ 8	
	♦ 53	
	♣ K10643	

The bidding ought to be:

W	N	E	S
1♥		2♣	
2♥		4♥	

On the ♦J lead, win with ♦K and play a spade. The defence can't stop you getting two spade ruffs, even winning the spade and playing on trumps.

You need to win the D at trick one in the East hand as you need the DA as an entry to ruff a spade.