

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	3♣	Pass	4♠

Hand 1

Love All, Dealer North

♠ A K Q J 9 6
♥ Q 7
♦ A 9
♣ J 10 7

♠ 8 2
♥ A 9 3
♦ Q 7 5 3
♣ A 4 3 2

N			
W		E	
			S

♠ 7 3
♥ J 10 6 4 2
♦ J 10 6 4 2
♣ 5

♠ 10 5 4
♥ K 8 5
♦ K 8
♣ K Q 9 8 6

This introductory hand is just about suit-preference **signals** when giving ruffs. Although not a fan of suit-preference **discards**, I think these signalling tools are essential. However, this deal shows you have to take care. East led his singleton Club against 4♠ and West won to lead a "high" Club back as a McKenney suit-preference signal for a Heart. Unfortunately, the highest Club that West had was the lowly ♣4 and East, who hadn't been paying sufficient attention to the small cards, assumed that it was West's lowest Club... a Diamond switch at trick three was not a success and North claimed an overtrick. If East had kept his eyes open and his mind clear he would have noticed that the ♣3 and ♣2 were missing and might have asked himself where they were. Had he done so he might have come to the right conclusion. As it was, all he could do was to blame his partner, "Couldn't you have led back a higher Club?" he demanded. West knew the form with this particular East. "Sorry, partner", he replied, with due contrition.

West	North	East	South
3♥	Pass	1♥	Pass
		4♥	All Pass

Hand 2

North-South Game, Dealer East

♠ K 10 8 5 3
♥ 4 3
♦ 5 2
♣ J 6 5 2

♠ A Q 2
♥ J 6 5 2
♦ J 7 3
♣ K 9 8

N			
W		E	
			S

♠ J
♥ A K Q 10 8 7
♦ Q 10 6
♣ A 10 4

♠ 9 7 6 4
♥ 9
♦ A K 9 8 4
♣ Q 7 3

God dealt you an Ace-King so you wouldn't have a problem with your opening lead. (Barry Crane 1927-1985). South leads the ♦A (or the ♦K) against 4♥ and North peters with the Five. East should, of course, chuck the Queen on that, trying to prevent any chance of an adverse Diamond ruff. Provided South reads the runes accurately he should continue with the other top Diamond and North-South will take the first three tricks via a third round ruff. A Heart exit at trick four (**not** opening up the frozen Club suit) means that the defenders should take the setting trick in Clubs at the end of the hand. It's worth mentioning that many players vary their strategy from Ace-King, leading the **Ace for attitude** and the **King for count**. However, how can South be sure on this layout that North has exactly two Diamonds and not four? In many cases the layout of the critical suit may be ambiguous – here it should not be. Why? Well, the next deal may clarify that.

West	North	East	South
Pass	3♣	Pass	1♠
		4♠	

Hand 3

East-West Game, Dealer South

♠ J 6 5 2
♥ J 7 3
♦ K 9 8
♣ A Q 2

♠ 9
♥ A K 9 8 4
♦ Q 7 3
♣ 9 7 6 4

N			
W		E	
			S

♠ 4 3
♥ 10 6 5 2
♦ J 6 5 2
♣ K J 8

♠ A K Q 10 8 7
♥ Q
♦ A 10 4
♣ 10 5 3

This deal bears great similarity to the previous one (Hand 2). West leads a top Heart against 4♠ and East should show the length of his Hearts in response to the lead (this is why many play **King for count** and why you should prefer to lead the King from this holding). What should East play? From four cards it is best to play the **second highest** (you can usually afford it) to avoid shenanigans from declarer. Here, in other words, East should play the Six. Now, for sure, this is an ambiguous position. East might have ♥6 x and it be right to continue Hearts. However, on the previous deal it should now become clear that the Five could not be from a four-card suit. 4♠ is still tricky to defend – but a Club switch through the ♣A Q followed by a trump exit from East should lead to defeat. Opening up Diamonds is fatal, of course.

West	North	East	South
1♠	Dble	3♣ ¹	Pass
4♠	Pass		

Hand 4

Game All, Dealer West

♠ 3
♥ A K 9 2
♦ A Q 6 4
♣ J 10 9 4

♠ A K 9 7 5 2
♥ J 7
♦ K J 2
♣ Q 6

N			
W		E	
			S

♠ Q J 10 4
♥ 6 3
♦ 10 8
♣ A K 7 5 3

♠ 8 6
♥ Q 10 8 5 4
♦ 9 7 5 3
♣ 8 2

¹ A **fit-jump**, showing four-card Spade support and longer Clubs. What should North lead to 4♠? Well, yes, a top Heart for sure. After all, *God dealt you an Ace-King so you wouldn't have a problem with your opening lead*. However, the chances of a Heart ruff are very small when dummy is known to have nine black cards and here it is better to start with the ♥A (**Ace for attitude**). On this deal that strikes gold – South signals enthusiastically with the Ten and a low Heart to the Queen at trick two puts the right defender on lead. The obvious Diamond switch skewers West's King and 4♠ fails. On a passive defence the contract would make. Say North cashed two Hearts and exited with a trump. Declarer could draw trumps and ruff the Clubs out, the thirteenth Club enabling him to make six Spades and four Clubs.

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♣	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	4♣
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♦
Pass	7♣	All Pass	

Hand 5

North-South Game, Dealer North

♠ K 5
♥ A K 5
♦ A
♣ A K J 9 7 6 2

♠ 9 7 4 3 2
♥ 9 4
♦ 9 5 4 3
♣ 8 5

N			
W		E	
			S

♠ Q J 10 8
♥ Q 10 6 2
♦ K J 8 7 2
♣ None

♠ A 6
♥ J 8 7 3
♦ Q 10 6
♣ Q 10 4 3

North-South blast their way into a grand slam and dummy is not quite what North was expecting for a positive response. Declarer takes the first Spade and rattles off trumps, trumps, and yet more trumps – how should East defend? Well, it should be obvious that North has no Spade loser – any losing Spade would have been ruffed on table. So the Spades are worthless. What about the red suits? If East discards the wrong thing he will have fallen foul of a pseudo-squeeze, and the fault is likely to lie with **West**. On the run of the trumps West's duty is to give his partner **count**. To that end he should discard all of one suit, (not Spades!) preferably by petering to show an even number. Here, West does best to pitch the ♦5, ♦4, ♦3 and ♦9 on the play of the Clubs (what use are these Diamond cards?) and that allows East to count the suit. Knowing the ♦K is a dead duck, East keeps his Hearts. Yes, it's just as good to pitch the ♥9 and ♥4 (in that order) first.

West	North	East	South
2♥	Pass	1♥	1♠
Pass	Pass	4♥	Pass

Hand 6

East-West Game, Dealer East

♠ 10 3
♥ 7 6
♦ Q 10 9 4
♣ K 10 9 5 2

♠ J 8 4
♥ K 9 5 3
♦ J 7 2
♣ Q 8 3

N			
W		E	
			S

♠ Q 9 6
♥ A J 10 8 4 2
♦ A K 8
♣ A

♠ A K 7 5 2
♥ Q
♦ 6 5 3
♣ J 7 6 4

This hand is similar in nature to Hand 5 – can the defenders avoid falling for a pseudo-squeeze? South leads the obvious ♠K against 4♥ and the defence plays three rounds of the suit. Note that the Ten of Spades signal at trick one is unambiguous this time, even though declarer should false-card with the Queen. Having taken his ruff North exits with a trump. With no legitimate play for the contract (other than finding someone with ♦Q x) declarer runs off all the trumps. North has to decide what to keep and may misdefend by discarding inaccurately, especially if declarer comes down to ♦J 7 and ♣Q 8 as the last four cards on table. Once again, it is up to South to come to the rescue. On the run of the Hearts his first three discards must be Diamonds and that should be followed with the ♣7. Now North should find it easy to get the ending right by barring the ♠K and keeping three Diamonds.

West	North	East	South
Pass	3♣	Pass	1♠
		4♠	

Hand 7

Game All, Dealer South

♠ 10 8 6 2
♥ K J
♦ 9 8 4 2
♣ A Q 6

♠ A 7 4
♥ 7 3 2
♦ K Q J 10
♣ 8 7 5

N			
W		E	
			S

♠ 5
♥ A Q 10 9 6 4
♦ 6 5 3
♣ 4 3 2

♠ K Q J 9 3
♥ 8 5
♦ A 7
♣ K J 10 9

North-South reach a thin game and West leads the obvious ♦K. South takes the Ace and immediately leads the ♠K – how should West defend? Well, it's all too easy to take the ♠A and play off more Diamonds – allowing declarer to do his own work. That, though, results in ten tricks – four Spades, four Clubs, one Diamond and a Heart ruff on table (having dumped a Heart on the long Club). This is not a hand for passive defence; a Heart switch is urgent. "How could I tell?" wails West. Well, taking the ♠A on the first round is an error, taking the second round of trumps allows East to make a crucial and revealing discard. Here, East discards the ♥10 on the ♠A and now the defence becomes as clear as daylight. **That's** how you tell, West – you enlist your partner's help! Note how suit-preference discards are useless here (as ever) – what can East pitch? And how do you know if his discard is a signal?

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

Hand 8

Love All, Dealer West

♠ 8 7 5
♥ A 7 4
♦ K Q J 10
♣ 7 3 2

♠ J 2
♥ K Q J 9 3
♦ A 7
♣ Q 10 9 8

N			
W		E	
			S

♠ A Q 6
♥ 10 8 6 2
♦ 9 8 4 2
♣ K J

♠ K 10 9 4 3
♥ 5
♦ 6 5 3
♣ A 6 5 4

Yes, this is very similar to Hand 7. (Compare the North hand here and the West hand there). It's a compare-and-contrast deal. North leads the ♦K against 4♥. West takes the Ace and plays the ♥K. Now what? Well, once again the crucial defence is to duck the Ace of trumps (it is a winner that is scarcely running away!) Now North should take the next trump and see what South does. Here, that player can see the importance of a Spade switch, so discards the ♠10. That gets the job done nicely. North can cash one Diamond (South's Three at trick one tells him that), but must then play a Spade. That's Goodnight Irene; West cannot avoid losing a trick in each suit. Once again, suit-preference discards are as much use as an ejector seat on a helicopter. What is South supposed to pitch on the second round of trumps? How does North know it is suit-preference and not just any old discard?