

Checklist: Take 90 seconds before you play

- ☑ **Estimate opponent's shapes and power** DATA
 - What did the bidding say/not say? (Decide during the bidding)
 - What does the opening lead say? (active/passive, effective/gift, unusual?)
- ☑ **Assess your hands:** ANALYSIS
 - Count **Losers** (Fast and Slow), **Winners** (Fast), **Stops** (in threat suit), **HCP** and **Entries**
 - Interpret the data – **Needs** (information, develop tricks, place missing cards) and **THREATS**
- ☑ **Create the Plan (and Plan B...)** PLAN
 - Assume perfect defense. Make the contract 1st. Overtricks later.
 - Best odds (suit combinations, how to combine chances, avoidance). Take **ALL** you chances.
- ☑ **Play - FOCUS and ATTENTION** THINK
 - Read each trick (show outs, Honors, leads) and use the new data – **COUNT! COUNT! COUNT!**
 - Don't rush – 1 trick at a time.
 - Be flexible – switch to plan B if Plan A can't work. Agile thinking. End play or Squeeze.

EXAMPLE HANDS

<p>NORTH ♠ J954 ♥ K54 ♦ AJ2 ♣ J10</p> <p>SOUTH ♠ KQ1032 ♥ A32 ♦ K3 ♣ Q43</p>	<p>Contract 4♠ South No opponent bids</p> <p>Winners: 4 Losers: 4 (1♠, 1♥, 0♦, 2♣) Slow Losers: 1(♥) Entries: Dummy 2, Hand 2 HCP: 24 (10 and 14)</p>	<p>Needs: Find 6 tricks before opponents find 4. Threats: setting trick will come from ♥. Must eliminate ♥ loser before opponents can claim it. Right plan depends on opening lead: ♥ lead: One stop left - ♣s require 2 losers to develop a winner. Cannot use ♣ to eliminate slow ♥ loser. The only way to eliminate a ♥ loser is to have the ♦ finesse work. Win in hand and play ♦K, ♦3, finessing the ♦Q if it doesn't show. ♣ or ♠ lead: 2 ♥ stops. Can play on ♣ (2 losers) to get the ♣Q for a ♥ pitch. DO NOT take the ♦ finesse – you do not need the added risk!! ♦ lead: If the ♦J holds, you can dump the ♥ loser on the 3rd ♦, if not, play on ♣s as above.</p>
<p>NORTH* ♠ K7 ♥ AJ83 ♦ AQ42 ♣ J76</p> <p>SOUTH ♠ A2 ♥ K42 ♦ K65 ♣ K8532</p>	<p>Contract: 3N Lead: ♠J No opponents bidding</p> <p>Winners: 7 Losers: 6-8 (3♠, 0-1♥, 1♦, 2-3♣) Slow Losers: 4(♥, ♦, 2♣) Entries: Dummy 4, Hand 3 HCP: 28 (15 and 13)</p>	<p>Needs: 2 Tricks before opponents get 5. Assume ♠ are 5-4 or 6-3. Threats: The ♠ lead leaves one stop in the threat suit (♠). West is the danger hand. If ♦ split 3-3 (36% chance), then need 1 trick from ♥ or ♣. If ♦ do not split 3-3 (64% chance) then need 2 more tricks. Needs (2): See how ♦ split before deciding what's next. If they split 3-3 then many options exist: a) Play on ♣ then ♥, b) Play on ♥, c) Cash top ♥ and play on ♣. If ♦ don't split, playing on ♣ for 2 tricks is likely best. Odds: More complicated than you think! ♣ then ♥: ♣ work: 52.8% = (50% ♣A onside + 2.8% ♣Q Singleton) ♣ fail: +24% = 48% ♣ fail x 50% ♥ finesse works 76.8% ♥ only (♥A, ♥K, low to ♥J): 50% West has Q +17.8% East has ♥Q and ♥ are 3-3 + 9.3% East ♥Qx. 48% (♥4-2)x50%(East 2♥s)x33% (Qx)+1.3% Stiff ♥Q 77.05%</p> <p style="color: red; font-style: italic; text-align: right;">Which Line is better?</p> <p><small>*Eric Rodwell & Mark Horton Rodwell Files Secrets of a Bridge Champion, Master Point Press Toronto (2011) Chapter 3 Tools for Analyzing a Bridge Hand p 59</small></p>

<p>Board 11 NORTH ♠ 843 ♥ A5 ♦ AJ9754 ♣ AJ</p> <p>SOUTH ♠ K762 ♥ 974 ♦ 106 ♣ KQ105</p>	<p><u>S</u> <u>W</u> <u>N</u> <u>E</u> P 1♥ 2♦ 2♥ DBI¹ P 3♦ AP 1 = Responsive</p> <p>Winners: 6 Lead: ♥10 Losers: 5-6 (3♠, 1♥, 1-2♦) Slow Losers: 5(3♠ 1♥, 1♦) Entries: South 1, North 3 HCP: 22 (14 and 8) MPs</p>	<p>Needs: 3 tricks Threats: ♥ and ♠ losers. Opening lead ♥10 - exposing the ♥ loser immediately. Can we eliminate that loser? Yes, on ♣. Play: Win ♥A in hand and play 3 rounds of ♣ pitching the losing ♥. All follow. Now Lead ♦10 from dummy and finesse (75% chance honors split). East wins the ♦K (West has the ♦Q) and continues ♣9. West ruffs ♦Q (an error). Win, Draw trump (West has 3). How do you play the ♠ suit? COUNT! West opened the bidding 1H so has 5 cards or more. They have shown 3 cards in both ♣ and ♦ leaving at most room for 2♠ cards. Give West ♠XJ ♥KQJxx ♦Qxx ♣xxx and X has to be the Ace for an opening bid! lead and DUCK 2 rounds of ♠ no matter what happens! Dummy's ♠K is now good and you've made 10 tricks for a TOP!</p>
<p>(corrected) NORTH* ♠ QJ ♥ AJ67 ♦ AJ42 ♣ J104</p> <p>SOUTH ♠ A10 ♥ KQ5432 ♦ K62 ♣ AQ</p>	<p><u>S</u> <u>W</u> <u>N</u> <u>E</u> 1♥ P 2N¹ P 3♥² P 4♦ P 4♠ P 4N P 5♦ P 6♥ P 1 = Jacoby 2N 2 = Extras/6♥ cards.</p> <p>Winners: 11 Losers: 2 (1♠, 1♣) Slow Losers: 2 Entries: South 5+, North 4 HCP: 33 (15 and 18)</p>	<p>Needs: 1 Trick Threats: Both black suit finesse are wrong. Plan: Combine chances. 3 finesses is 12.5%. What's better? Draw trumps then: ♦ finesse and 3-3 ♦ Suit plus either black suit finesse? That's 18% +75%(82% ♥ not 3-3) or 79.5%. We can do better still....</p> <p>50% ♣ Finesse (East danger hand for ♠) wins + 18.5% ♦ Discard on long ♣ then ruff 3rd round of ♦ 37%(50%) for Q + 16.25% ♠ finesse 50%(32.5%) = 84.75%!! Now we're cookin'!!! See Eddie Kantar Take All Your Chances at Bridge Master Point Press Toronto (2009) Problem 17 p 32.</p>
<p>NORTH ♠ AQxxx ♥ Q8x ♦ A4 ♣ KJ10</p> <p>SOUTH ♠ 10 ♥ A9x ♦ KJ9x ♣ AQxxx</p>	<p>North East South West 1♠ Pass 2♣ Pass 3♣ Pass 3♦ Pass 3♥ Pass 4♠¹ Pass 4♥² Pass 6♣ AP 1= Minorwood (RKB for ♠s) 2= 0 or 3 3= King Ask (5 Keys).</p> <p>Winners: 9 Losers: 2 (♥) Lead: ♥6 Slow Losers: 2 Entries: South 4, North 5 HCP: 30 (16 and 14) IMPs</p>	<p>In memory of my dear friend Al. Dayton Columbus Regional A/X Swiss. Need: 3 tricks. Expert Opponents. Threat: 3 finesses! We need better odds. Opening lead ♥6 exposes 2♥ losers. ♥K likely with RHO. Sequence play to maximize suit development and use of entries. ♥A, ♠A, ♠ ruff low. ♦A, ♠ ruff low (♠K from East!). ♦K, ♦ ruff low. ♣KJ leaves 3rd trump with West. Play ♠Qx, throwing losing ♥s. Yes, West ruffs the 5th ♠, but south has only the ♦J and 2 trumps – making 6. Declarer played for a 4-3 ♠ split (62.2%) and got ♠Kxx as a bonus (27%), ♦Qxx (37%) and 3-2 ♣ split (67.8%) with many cross ruff variations if good splits didn't happen. NOTE: all 3 finesses were wrong, and the contract comes home using good technique - combining chances.</p>

Recommended Reading (● = Easiest ●●●●● = Most Advanced)

- William S. Root **How to Play a Bridge Hand** Crown New York (1990)
- Eddie Kantar **Take All Your Chances at Bridge** Master point Press Toronto (2009)
- Eddie Kantar **Take All Your Chances at Bridge 2** Master Point Press Toronto (2011)
- Marshall Miles **All Fifty-two Cards – How to Reconstruct the Concealed Hands at the Bridge Table** Exposition Press New York (1982) 2nd Edition
- Hugh Kelsey & Michael Glauert **Bridge Odds for Practical Players** Cassell Great Britain (2001) 7th Edition.
- Eric Rodwell and Mark Horton **The Rodwell Files Secrets of a Bridge Champion** Master Point Press Toronto (2011).