

Practice Session for U3ABD13: Plan the Play

Welcome!

Here is a detailed description of the first few hands that you could play in today's Practice Session. It includes details like the cards in the hands, the correct contract, the opening lead, and how we suggest you should plan the play, based on that information. We've shown the Defenders' hands too, but you can't see those when playing, so they should not be part of your planning!

While you could bid and play the hands this week, we REALLY wanted you, as Declarer, to focus on **PLANNING THE PLAY**.

Don't feel bad if you found planning difficult or your plan was nothing like we suggest here; it will get easier with practice. In truth, some of these hands are **quite awkward**. The important thing is: when you are Declarer and you see the opening lead and Dummy, STOP and try to come up with a plan that will deliver your contract - and then implement it.

Remember the old axiom "if you fail to plan, you plan to fail". Trite and irritating, but often true. Make a plan! Take charge! Be Declarer!

Remember, we're here to help, share our enthusiasm for this great game. You will make mistakes, but we're always happy to explain or answer questions. You're playing with people who are just starting out, too. Let's have fun together!

-Ed

Advanced topics

Advanced topics are in green, like this. These are included for completeness; you can ignore them for now or dive in if you want more.

Lesson Summary

For this week's module, the full Lesson Summary is only available in a separate document, called - not surprisingly - **U3ABD13 Plan The Play Lesson Summary**. There's a link to this on our web site, next to the other links for this week. But you might find these checklists useful.

Checklist for Plan the Pay in a NT contract

- Step 1: Count top tricks
 - A = 1
 - AK = 2
 - AKQ = 3
 - etc
- Step 2: Find extra tricks if you need them
 - Promote high cards?
 - Establish long suits?
 - Take finesses?
- Step 3: Check for Risks and how to survive them
 - Bad splits
 - Failing finesses
 - Not enough entries
- Step 4: Make your plan

Checklist for Plan the Pay in a Suit contract

- Step 1A: Count top tricks outside the trump suit
- Step 1B: Count certain winners in the trump suit (if you lead them)
- Step 2: Find extra tricks if you need them
 - Ruff from the short hand?
 - Cross-ruff?
 - Promote high cards?
 - Establish long suits?
 - Take finesses?
- Step 3: Draw Trumps - when and how
 - All of them, immediately?
 - Some of them, immediately?
 - Delay drawing trumps?
- Step 4: Check for Risks and how to survive them
 - Running out of trumps
 - Opponents over-ruff
 - Opponents ruff
 - Bad splits
 - Failing finesses
 - Not enough entries
- Step 5: Make your plan

The Hands

North East South West

1NT Pass 3NT Pass
Pass Pass

♠ A6
♥ KQJT
♦ K632
♣ 643

♠ 97 ♠ QJT853
♥ 8543 ♥ A7
♦ QJ8 ♦ T95
♣ QT95 ♣ J2

♠ K42
♥ 962
♦ A74
♣ AK87

Board: 1 Dealer: North Lead: ♠Q #H98

The contract is 3NT so you need 9 tricks.

Step 1: Count your top winners

- Spades: A & K
- Hearts: none
- Diamonds: A & K
- Clubs: A & K

Making 6 top winners

Step 2: Find THREE extra tricks

- Promote three Hearts by forcing out the Ace to get three extra tricks. 100% chance
- Establish the 13th Diamond by leading Diamonds 3 times to get one extra trick. They have to split 3:3, so a 35% chance.
- Establish the 13th Club by leading Clubs 3 times to get one extra trick. They have to split 3:3, so a 35% chance.

It's much better to promote your Hearts as that's guaranteed to deliver the 3 extra tricks that you need for 3NT. Even if you do successfully establish the 13th Club and 13th Diamond, you still need another extra trick!

Step 3: Identify risks

- Assuming you take the first trick with the King of Spades, you only have one more stop in Spades, and promoting your Hearts will lose the lead (to the Ace). Your opponent will then almost certainly lead another Spade - removing your remaining stop in that suit, so your opponents can make as many as 5 more tricks in their established suit (if Spades split 7:1).
- You can prevent that happening by leading Hearts immediately, on the second trick - and continue until you've either made 3 tricks in Hearts or the Ace has been played, promoting your remaining Hearts so you can play them next.
- You have two top winners in Clubs and Diamonds, so those suits are not a risk.

Step 4: Make your plan - and implement it!

1. Take the first trick with South's King of Spades
2. Lead a Heart from South and play North's King
3. Keep playing North's Hearts until an opponent plays the Ace or you have made 3 Heart tricks
4. When you opponent plays the Ace of Hearts, they will probably lead another Spade (returning partner's opening lead); take this trick with North's Ace
5. Take any remaining Heart tricks
6. Play the Ace and King of Diamonds
7. Play the Ace and King of Clubs to make the contract, then concede the remaining tricks!

Advanced bit

Sometimes in this sort of situation you "hold up": you delay playing your top winners in the opponent's long suit, to make it harder for their partner to lead the suit back to them later, but there's no need on this occasion.

East South West North

1NT Pass Pass Pass

♠ T7
 ♥ 983
 ♦ KQT4
 ♣ QJT3

♠ 652 ♠ A43
 ♥ AKJ7 ♥ Q2
 ♦ 973 ♦ A865
 ♣ 986 ♣ A542

♠ KQJ98
 ♥ T654
 ♦ J2
 ♣ K7

Board: 2 Dealer: East Lead: ♠K #H26

The contract is 1NT so you need 7 tricks.

Step 1: Count your top winners

- Spades: A
- Hearts: AKQJ
- Diamonds: A
- Clubs: A

Making 7 top winners

Step 2: Find ZERO extra tricks

You do not need any extra tricks, so skip this step!

Step 3: Identify risks

- With all the top winners you need, you can simply play them and make the contract
- The main thing that could go wrong is that you play the Hearts badly. You have AKJx in one hand and Qx in the other, so need to play the winners from the short hand first i.e. play the Queen from the East hand and THEN play the AKJ.
- The other risk is that you could end up in the wrong hand. The only way to get to the West hand is through Hearts (no other entries), so don't play a low Heart to the Ace, then lead a low Heart back to the Queen. Your King and Jack will be stranded!
- Your opponents can make several tricks in Spades, but they have to get the lead first - so take your seven tricks without losing the lead.

Step 4: Make your plan - and implement it!

1. Take the first trick with East's Ace of Spades
2. Play East's Queen of Hearts
3. Lead East's 2 of Hearts towards West and play the Ace, King, and Jack
4. Play the Ace of Diamonds and Ace of Clubs to make the contract, then concede the remaining tricks

Advanced bit

Sometimes in this sort of situation you "hold up": you delay playing your top winners in the opponent's long suit, to make it harder for their partner to lead the suit back to them later, but there's no need on this occasion.

South West North East

1NT Pass Pass Pass

♠ A5

♥ QJ87

♦ 962

♣ J543

♠ QJT982

♥ 53

♦ 84

♣ KQ2

♠ K43

♥ AK

♦ A753

♣ T987

♠ 76

♥ T9642

♦ KQJT

♣ A6

Board: 3 Dealer: South Lead: ♠Q

#H25

The contract is 1NT so you need 7 tricks.

Step 1: Count your top winners

- Spades: AK
- Hearts: AKQJ
- Diamonds: A
- Clubs: none

Making 7 top winners

Step 2: Find ZERO extra tricks

You do not need any extra tricks, so skip this step!

Step 3: Identify risks

- With all the top winners you need, you can simply play them and make the contract
- The main thing that could go wrong is that you play the Hearts badly. You have AK in one hand and QJxx in the other, so need to play the winners from the short hand first i.e. play the Ace and King from the South hand, THEN play the QJ from the North. But once you have played the Ace and King, how do you get to the Queen and Jack? You don't have another Heart in the South hand and there is only one entry in the North hand, the Ace of Spades. So it is vital that you preserve this entry until you need it; you must not play North's Ace on the first trick, you must take the trick with South's King. An easy mistake to make, this is why you must STOP when you see the opening lead and Dummy, to make a plan!
- Your opponents can make several tricks in Spades and Clubs, but they have to get the lead first - so take your seven tricks without losing the lead.

Step 4: Make your plan - and implement it!

1. Take the first trick with South's King of Spades
2. Play South's Ace and King of Hearts
3. Lead a Spade to North's Ace
4. Play the Queen and Jack of Hearts
5. Play the Ace of Diamonds to make the contract, then concede the remaining tricks

West North East South

1NT Pass Pass Pass

♠ QJT982
♥ 53
♦ 84
♣ KQ2

♠ AK3
♥ QJ
♦ A753
♣ 9873

♠ 54
♥ AKT7
♦ 962
♣ T654

♠ 76
♥ 98642
♦ KQJT
♣ AJ

Board: 4 Dealer: West Lead: ♠Q #H3

The contract is 1NT so you need 7 tricks.

Step 1: Count your top winners

- Spades: AK
- Hearts: AKQJ
- Diamonds: A
- Clubs: none

Making 7 top winners

Step 2: Find ZERO extra tricks

You do not need any extra tricks, so skip this step!

Step 3: Identify risks

- With all the top winners you need, you can simply play them and make the contract
- The main thing that could go wrong is that you play the Hearts badly. You have AKT7 in one hand and QJ in the other, so need to play the winners from the short hand first i.e. play the Queen and Jack from the West hand, THEN play the Ace and King from the East hand. But once you have played the Queen and Jack, how do you get to the Ace and King? You don't have another Heart in the West hand and there are NO ENTRIES in the East hand! Oh dear. It's not obvious, but you must **overtake** the second Heart (Queen or Jack) with the Ace i.e. use it as an entry. Luckily you have the Ace, King and Ten in the East hand, so you will still make four tricks in Hearts.
- Your opponents can make several tricks in Spades and Clubs and Diamonds, but they have to get the lead first. Make sure you take your seven tricks before you lose the lead.

Step 4: Make your plan - and implement it!

1. Take the first trick with West's Ace (or King) of Spades
2. Play West's Queen of Hearts
3. Play West's Jack of Hearts and overtake it with East's Ace
4. Play the King and Ten of Hearts
5. Lead a Spade to West's King
6. Play the Ace of Diamonds to make the contract, then concede the remaining tricks!

North East South West

1NT Pass 2♦ Pass
2♥ Pass Pass Pass

♠ A73
♥ QJ
♦ J986
♣ AJ96

♠ K9652
♥ 97
♦ A7
♣ 5432

♠ QJ4
♥ AKT
♦ T432
♣ QT7

♠ T8
♥ 865432
♦ KQ5
♣ K8

Board: 5 Dealer: North Lead: ♦2 #H3751

The contract is 2H so you need 8 tricks. ***This is an awkward hand!***

Step 1A: Count your top winners (outside trumps)

- Spades: A
- Hearts: ignore
- Diamonds: none
- Clubs: AK

Making 3 top winners; you need 5 more.

Step 1B: Count your trump winners

- You have 8 trumps, if you draw trumps and they split 5:0 you could have 0 trump winners; if they split 3:3 you should have at least 3.

So... you have just 3 certain winners and may need 5 extra tricks we will assume a more likely 3:3 or 4:2 split, so you just need 3.

Step 2: Find THREE-FIVE extra tricks

- You can force out the Ace of Diamonds to promote two Diamonds, for two extra tricks. 100% chance. Actually, with East's Diamond lead, you can always make three Diamond tricks.
- If the Club finesse (of the Queen) works, you may have one extra trick. 50% chance. But it's only worth having if you can throw a

losing Spade on the third round; if not, you have to discard a Diamond winner. Not worth it.

- You can't get extra tricks by ruffing from the short hand, because North's only short suit is Hearts - and that's trumps.
- Remember: ruffing from the long hand (South) won't deliver extra tricks

Step 3: Draw trumps

- You can't earn any extra tricks by ruffing from the short hand, so draw trumps as soon as possible
- Your opponents can't see the bare QJ in your (North) hand, they can only see the six small Hearts in Dummy. Lead from Dummy and you might even bluff your opponents into playing both their honours on the same trick!

Step 4: Identify risks

- There's a serious risk that your winning Diamonds will be ruffed - so you must draw trumps immediately; bite the bullet
- Trumps may split badly - but there's not much you can do about that
- Your opponents have lots of high Hearts (A, K, T & 9) so they will be able to over-ruff any of your small Hearts. Draw trumps!
- If the Club finesse fails you've lost a trick that you didn't need to lose (ruff the third Club), and your opponents will probably cash a Spade trick too. Not worth doing

Step 5: Make your plan - and implement it!

1. Play a low Diamond from Dummy - SECOND PLAYER PLAYS LOW. If West plays the Ace, you've promoted your K, Q & J; if West plays low, you win with the nine; if West plays the Ten, you win with the Jack and must make two more tricks.
2. Let's assume West plays the Ace and leads another Diamond...
3. Take the Diamond trick with Dummy's King and lead a low Heart towards North's Queen. This will draw some trumps and force out the Ace or King.
4. The next time you get the lead, lead another low Heart to North's Jack (or lead it, if not in Dummy).
5. After two rounds of trumps, the opponents' Hearts are all bigger than yours, so don't lead another Heart.
6. Play your Ace and King of Clubs.
7. Play your winning Diamonds. If an opponent ruffs, it's a high trump that is always going to make
8. With a 3:2 trump split, you should make one Spade, three Hearts, three Diamonds and two Clubs. With a 4:1 trump split, you make one less Heart, but still make the contract. A 5:0 split is fatal, but unlikely (around a 5% chance).

East South West North

1 ♥ Pass 2 ♥ Pass

4 ♥ Pass Pass Pass

♠ QT32
♥ 4
♦ 9753
♣ AK93

♠ 76
♥ J983
♦ KQ
♣ 87654

♠ AK54
♥ KQT52
♦ AJ
♣ Q2

♠ J98

Board: 6 Dealer: East Lead: ♣J #H520

The contract is 4H so you need 10 tricks.

Step 1A: Count your top winners

- Spades: AK
- Hearts: ignore
- Diamonds: AK
- Clubs: none

Making 4 top winners; you need 6 more.

Step 1B: Count your trump winners

- You have 9 solid trumps. If you just use them to draw trumps, you have 4 trump winners.

So... you have 8 certain winners, you need 2 extra tricks.

♥ A76
 ♦ T8642
 ♣ JT

Step 2: Find TWO extra tricks

- You can ruff two Spades from West, the short hand, for two extra tricks. 100% chance
- You might be able to ruff three Clubs from East, the long hand, for what looks like three extra tricks, but it's only two, really (as you then only make 3 trump tricks by leading trumps). Worth it?

Ruffing two Spades is the clear winner!

Step 3: Draw trumps

- You need two trumps in West, the short hand, to ruff two losing Spades for your extra tricks, so can only afford to draw two rounds of trumps before ruffing the Spades.
- While you would normally draw those two rounds of trumps as soon as you can, to reduce the risk of an over-ruff, you can't afford to do so because you will lose the lead to the Ace of Hearts on the first round - see *Step 4: Identify Risks*

Step 4: Identify risks

- The Heart suit is pretty solid. Even if trumps split 4:0, you can draw them and have one trump left.
- The obvious risk is running out of trumps in the short hand; you need two trumps to ruff the two losing Spades for your two extra tricks. So you can only afford to draw two rounds of trumps before ruffing the small Spades.
- **But what does South's lead of the Jack of Clubs mean?** Looks like a high-low signal, telling partner that they have a doubleton. When North leads a third round of Clubs for partner to ruff, you must ruff high from the East hand or risk being over-ruffed with a small Heart, losing a vital trick!

Step 5: Make your plan - and implement it!

1. Expect North to play their Ace on the Jack of Clubs, then lead the King, then a third Club for South to ruff. Ruff high from East on the third round with the Ten of Hearts, so you aren't over-ruffed with a low Heart!
2. If South over-ruffs with the Ace of Hearts, it's simple: whatever they lead next, draw two rounds of trumps from the East hand by playing the King and Queen, then play A&K of Spades and ruff two low Spades with West's J and 9 of Hearts. Cash your remaining winners for ten tricks and the contract. (6 Hearts, 2 Spades, 2 Diamonds.)
3. If South does not over-ruff with the Ace, it's a bit harder: continue by playing A&K of Spades and then ruffing two low Spades with West's J and 9 of Hearts, then lead the 8 of Hearts and play low from East. Then lead West's 3 of Hearts and play East's King. Then play East's Queen of Hearts. And your remaining winners - you will lose one of those tricks to the Ace of Hearts, but only one, making your contract.
4. Tricky, but by playing high Hearts at every opportunity, you avoid losing an extra trick to a Defender's low Heart.

South West North East

1NT Pass 2♦ Pass
 2♥ Pass Pass Pass

♠ T
 ♥ K8543
 ♦ 742
 ♣ AJ85

♠ KQJ3
 ♥ QT7

♠ 9865
 ♥ J92

Board: 7 Dealer: South Lead: ♠K #H3760

The contract is 2H so you need eight tricks. **Another awkward hand.**

Step 1A: Count your top winners

- Spades: A
- Hearts: ignore
- Diamonds: none
- Clubs: AK

Making 3 top winners; you need 5 more.

Step 1B: Count your trump winners

♦ KT83 ♦ AQ5
 ♣ 97 ♣ QT4
 ♠ A742
 ♥ A6
 ♦ J96
 ♣ K632

- You have A&K, for two trump winners, but your other trumps are quite small. Your opponents have 6 trumps, if they split 3:3 (unlikely) you would make two more trump tricks by leading them (4 in total); with the more likely 4:2 split, you lose 2 trumps tricks and make a total of 3 trump tricks; with a 5:1 or 6:0 split you'll only make the A&F, just TWO trump tricks by leading them. Oh dear.

So... you have 5 certain winners, you need 3 extra tricks.

Step 2: Find THREE extra tricks

- You can't ruff anything from the short hand, it has 3 or more cards in every side suit.
- You CAN ruff three Spades from North, the long hand, for three extra tricks, but only if they split 4:4. While you don't usually ruff from the long hand, on this occasion you should not attempt to draw all the trumps as you will lose 2 or 3 trump tricks. So on this occasion, ruffing from the long hand looks like a good idea. Can you see a better one?
- You have AKJ in Clubs, could try to finesse the Queen for an extra trick but you have 8 Clubs; even if the finesse works your extra Club winner will be ruffed unless you draw trumps first - and that's very risky, unless they split 3:3
- You COULD try drawing all the trumps, hoping they split 3:3, but you still only have 7 tricks, and have to rely on an extra trick in Clubs (you could make a fourth Club if they split 3:2 - or all four Clubs if the Queen drops or the finesse works - now you have drawn all the trumps). If they split 4:2, 5:1 or 6:0 you're doomed.
- Ruffing Spades 3 times looks most likely to succeed, it works as long as the Spades split 4:4, regardless of how the trumps split or how Clubs behave - but it's hardly certain, and a close call.

Step 3: Draw trumps

- You want to keep your three small trumps in North so you can ruff South's 3 small Spades if trumps split badly. But you CAN afford to draw two rounds of trumps before ruffing the Spades. Should you?
- You should draw those two rounds of trumps as soon as you can, to reduce the risk of an over-ruff. If you lose the lead to an over-ruff you're doomed anyway!

Step 4: Identify risks

- The Heart suit may split 3:3, but it is more likely to split 4:2, 5:1 or even 6:0. So trying to draw all the trumps is risky.
- The other obvious risk is running out of trumps in the long hand; you need to make 3 small trumps for your three extra tricks. So you can only afford to draw two rounds of trumps before ruffing the small Spades.
- Notice that even if the Hearts split really nicely (3:3), you only have 7 certain tricks, and must rely on the Club finesse (50% chance) or the Queen dropping, or the Clubs splitting 3:2 so you can establish a small Club.
- Your "ruff 3 small Spades" plan needs you to lead Spades from the South hand THREE TIMES - so preserve the entries carefully! You will need to use the Ace of Hearts as an entry. So you cannot draw two rounds of trumps immediately after all...

Step 5: Make your plan - and implement it!

- Play South's Ace on the lead of the King of Spades.
- Lead a second Spade from South and ruff with one of North's small trumps. Lead a Heart back to South's Ace.
- Lead third Spade from South and ruff with one of North's small trumps. Lead a Club back to South's Ace.
- Lead a fourth Spade from South and ruff with one of North's small trumps. Lead the King of Hearts to draw some more

trumps, then lead the King of Clubs to make the contract.

If you look at the hands, Hearts do indeed split 3:3 (lucky you) so you can draw them all safely, but you still need to get lucky again with Clubs - and yes, they do split 3:2. So either plan would work, with the lucky splits.

West North East South

| | | | |
|---------|--------|--------|------|
| 1 ♥ | Pass | 3 ♥ | Pass |
| 4 ♥ | Pass | Pass | Pass |
| | ♠ JT97 | | |
| | ♥ Q9 | | |
| | ♦ KQ3 | | |
| | ♣ 7532 | | |
| ♠ AK43 | | ♠ 62 | |
| ♥ KJT53 | | ♥ A642 | |
| ♦ 864 | | ♦ J52 | |
| ♣ A | | ♣ KQJ4 | |
| | ♠ Q85 | | |
| | ♥ 87 | | |
| | ♦ AT97 | | |
| | ♣ T986 | | |

Board: 8 Dealer: West Lead: ♦ K #H37

The contract is 4H, so you need to make 10 tricks.

Step 1A: Count top tricks outside trump suit

- Spades: AK
- Hearts: ignore
- Diamonds: none
- Clubs: AKQJ

Making 6 top winners; you need 4 more

Step 1B: Count certain winners in trump suit (if suit is led)

You have AKJT, so must make 3 trump tricks (presuming you lose one to the Queen). You have a total of 9 trumps, so even if they split really badly (4:0) you must also make the fifth small heart. So by leading A, K, J, T you will draw all the trumps (making at least 3) and your remaining 5H will make a fourth trump trick. Sounds easy...

Step 2: Find ZERO extra tricks (ruff from short hand / promote / establish / finesse)

If you can make 10 tricks, you don't need to make any extra tricks! Can you find any? By ruffing two losing Spades from East, the short hand. Maybe.

Step 3: Draw trumps (all / some /delay)

So, should you draw all the trumps immediately? Probably.

Step 4: Identify & minimize risks

You have three losing Diamonds in each hand and North has led the King of Diamonds. It looks like you are going to lose 3 Diamond tricks straight off. You must not lose any more.

Unfortunately, if the Diamonds split 4:3 (quite likely) and South has the 13th Diamond and leads it, things get awkward; it's the best Defence. You are missing the Q987 of trumps, so if North plays ANY of those - even the 7 - you will be forced to play the Ace from East's hand, leaving you with just one card higher than the Queen to draw the 3 remaining trumps! To stop that happening, you must ruff with the Ten from West's hand. Now, you will either win the trick with the Ten, (preserving the Ace and King to draw trumps) or force out the Queen which you can beat with East's Ace - leaving you with the King and Jack to draw trumps.

You also need to figure out how to make the best of the K, Q and J of Clubs in East's hand. You need to play West's Ace of Clubs first - but how do you get back to East's hand to do that? Once you have drawn trumps, if East still has the Ace of Hearts, you can use that. If not, you can ruff a Spade.

Phew.

Drawing trumps: If trumps split 4:0 you are doomed. If trumps split 3:1 you are doomed unless the Queen drops (is a singleton). You just have to hope they split 2:2.

Step 5: Make your plan

1. Watch your opponents take 3 tricks in Diamonds.
2. If South leads the 13th Diamond, ruff with West's Ten of Hearts.
3. If North overtrumps your Ten with the Queen of Hearts:
 - a. Play East's Ace of Hearts to take the trick
 - b. Lead a low Heart to West's King
 - c. Lead West's Jack to draw the remaining trump
 - d. Play West's Ace of Clubs to unblock

- e. Play the Ace and King of Spades
- f. Ruff a third Spade with East's remaining Heart
- g. Play the K, Q, and J of Clubs to make the contract
- 4. If North does NOT overtrump with the Queen of Hearts:
 - a. Discard a Spade from East.
 - b. Lead a low Heart to East's Ace
 - c. Lead a low Heart to West's King to draw the remaining trumps
 - d. Play West's Ace of Clubs to unblock
 - e. Play the Ace and King of Spades
 - f. Ruff a third Spade with East's remaining Heart
 - g. Play the K, Q, and J of Clubs to make the contract

North East South West

1NT Pass 3NT Pass
Pass Pass

| | |
|--------|--------|
| ♠ JT96 | ♠ Q87 |
| ♥ 86 | ♥ QJT9 |
| ♦ JT86 | ♦ 97 |
| ♣ 985 | ♣ AT72 |
| ♠ 542 | |
| ♥ K54 | |
| ♦ AQ43 | |
| ♣ KQJ | |

Board: 9 Dealer: North Lead: ♥ Q #H99

The contract is 3NT, so you need to make 9 tricks.

Step 1: Count your top winners

- Spades: A & K
- Hearts: A & K
- Diamonds: A & K & Q
- Clubs: none

Making 7 top winners. You need 2 more

Step 2: Find TWO extra tricks:

- Promote two Clubs by forcing out the Ace to get two extra tricks. 100% chance
- Establish the 13th Diamond by leading them 3 times to get one extra trick. They have to split 3:3, so a 35% chance.
- Establish the 13th Heart by leading them 3 times to get one extra trick. They have to split 3:3, so a 35% chance.

It's much better to promote your Clubs as that's 100% guaranteed to deliver the 2 extra tricks you need. The probability of getting two tricks by establishing the 13th Club and 13th Diamond is very small (35% of 35% i.e. around 10%).

Step 3: Identify risks

- Assuming you take the first trick with the King of Spades, you only have one more stop in Spades, and promoting your Clubs will lose the lead (to the Ace). Your opponents will almost certainly lead another Spade - removing your remaining stop in that suit, so they can make as many as 4 more tricks in their established suit (if Spades split 6:1) once they get the lead.
- You can prevent that by leading Clubs immediately, on the second trick - and continue until you've either made 2 tricks in Clubs or the Ace has been played, promoting your remaining Clubs so you can play them next time you get the lead.
- You have several entries to Dummy, so no risk of getting stuck.
- You have two top winners in Hearts and three top winners in Diamonds, so those suits are not a risk.

Step 4: Make your plan - and implement it!

1. Take the first trick with the King of Spades, in Hand
2. Lead a Club towards Dummy and play the King
3. Keep playing Clubs until an opponent plays the Ace (or you have made 2 Club tricks)
4. When your opponent wins with the Ace of Clubs, whatever they lead you can win, and cash your remaining winners to make the contract.
5. If Hearts or Diamonds split nicely (3-3) then you can lead the 13th card(s) to make an extra trick at the end - otherwise concede the remaining tricks!

East South West North

1NT Pass 3NT Pass
Pass Pass

♠ 972
♥ QJ52
♦ J942
♣ JT

♠ A86
♥ K93
♦ KT7
♣ A542

♠ QJT5
♥ T74
♦ Q86
♣ Q97

♠ K43
♥ A86
♦ A53
♣ K863

Board: 10 Dealer: East Lead: ♠Q #H383

The contract is 3NT, so you need to make 9 tricks.

Step 1: Count your top winners

- Spades: A & K
- Hearts: A & K
- Diamonds: A & K
- Clubs: A & K

Making 8 top winners. You need 1 more

Step 2: Find ONE extra trick:

- Establish a small Clubs by 3 playing rounds. They have to split 3:2, a 68% chance
- Cash the Ace of Diamonds and hope than the Queen or Jack falls. If it does, you can lead towards West's KT and either play the Ten (hoping South has the other Honour), or play the King (hoping it was QJ doubleton). I don't know the odds of this working, but they're poor - maybe 10%?
- Any other chance of an extra trick? Not really. Bad defence?

So trying to establish a fourth Club is the best play. Fingers crossed.

Step 3: Identify risks

- Assuming you take the first trick with the King of Spades, you only have one more stop in Spades, and promoting your Clubs will lose the lead on the third round. Your opponents will then almost certainly lead another Spade - removing your remaining stop in that suit, so they can make as many as 4 more tricks in their established suit (if Spades split 6:1) once they get the lead.
- You can prevent that by leading the Ace of Clubs on the second trick, and continuing with the King of Clubs. If both opponents follow both times, Clubs have split 3:2 and you can lead another Club, to lose the trick but promote your fourth Club. If not, it's time to try that repeated Diamond finesse!
- You have several entries to Dummy, so no risk of getting stuck.
- You have two top winners in Hearts and three top winners in Diamonds, so those suits are not a risk.

Step 4: Make your plan - and implement it!

1. Take the first trick with the King of Spades, in Hand
2. Play the King of Clubs
3. Lead a Club towards Dummy and play the Ace
4. If both opponents followed both times, Clubs have split 3:2, hooray:
 - a. Lead another Club, to lose the trick but promote your fourth Club.
 - b. Whatever your opponent leads (probably a Spade), take the trick.
 - c. You can now cash your winners - including the fourth Club - to make the contract.
5. If either opponent does NOT play a Club on either round, STOP. They are not going to break 3:2 for you! It's time to try that desperate Diamond play:
 - a. Cash the Ace of Diamonds
 - b. If the Queen or Jack does not fall, accept defeat with grace. Play your remaining winners (while you can!), then lose the lead and concede the rest to go just one down.
 - c. If the Queen or Jack falls, lead towards West's KT and either play the Ten (hoping South has the other Honour), or play the King (hoping it was QJ doubleton). If you guess right, you may make the contract - if you don't, you're one down.

South West North East

1NT Pass 3NT Pass
Pass Pass

| | | |
|--------|---------|--------|
| | ♠ A7 | |
| | ♥ Q53 | |
| | ♦ 87432 | |
| | ♣ AK2 | |
| ♠ QT2 | | ♠ J986 |
| ♥ JT98 | | ♥ 764 |
| ♦ AQ | | ♦ KJT |
| ♣ 9765 | | ♣ T84 |
| | ♠ K543 | |
| | ♥ AK2 | |
| | ♦ 965 | |
| | ♣ QJ3 | |

Board: 11 Dealer: South Lead: ♥J #H2421

The contract is 3NT, so you need to make 9 tricks.

Step 1: Count your top winners

- Spades: A & K
- Hearts: A & K & Q
- Diamonds: none
- Clubs: A & K & Q

Making 8 top winners. You need 1 more

Step 2: Find ONE extra trick:

- Establish your small Diamonds by leading them 3 or 4 times to get one or two extra tricks. If they 3:2 (a 68% chance), you will make two; if they split 4:1 (27%) you will make one. If they split 5:0 (a 5% chance) this ruse will fail!
- Anything else worth trying? nope.

So, establishing the small Diamonds is the only hope for the Rebel Alliance.

Step 3: Identify risks

- You have two stops in Spades, 3 stops in Hearts and 3 stops in Clubs, so these suits all look fairly safe.
- West's lead of the Jack of Hearts strongly suggests that they have a sequence, QJT, and probably one or two more, maybe even QJTxxxx. But you have 3 stops, and the Defence only has 7 Hearts, so if West has a long Heart suit (a 7:0 or 6:1 or 5:2 split) East won't be able to lead them back by the time they're established.
- The suit you want to establish, Diamonds, is also the most dangerous, as you are missing all five top Diamonds. You have to hope that they split 3:2 (quite likely) so that you only lose 3 Diamond tricks. If they split 4:1, you have to hope that you don't also lose a Heart. So you need to keep an eye on the split.
- The other small risk is you might not have an entry to Dummy's long Diamonds by the time they are established: preserve Dummy's entries.
- So you need to set about the Diamond suit right away, while you still have stops in Hearts (and the other suits).

Step 4: Make your plan - and implement it!

1. Trick 1: Take the first trick with South's Ace of Hearts
2. Trick 2: Lead one of South's Diamonds to lose trick #2 to the opponent's A, K, Q, J or T! Assuming that both opponents followed, Diamonds are split 4:1 or 3:2, so the plan might work.

NOTE: If either opponent does not follow, Diamonds have split 5:0 and you can't make the contract. Give up! Cash your 8 top winners while you still can and concede the rest, to go one down.

3. Trick 3: Your opponent will probably lead another Heart. Take trick #3 with South's King of Hearts
4. Trick 4: Lead another of South's Diamonds to continue establishing your small Diamonds.

If both opponents followed, Diamonds are split 3:2, so the plan will work. If either opponent did not follow, Diamonds are split 4:1 so you CAN make the contract with a bit of luck.

5. Trick 5: Whoever won trick #4 will probably lead another Heart. (If they don't, that's good, as it preserves a stop.) Take trick #5 with North's Queen.
6. Trick 6: Lead a third Diamond from North. This will lose to the remaining Diamond.

If they split 3:2, you can make the contract even if West can play a Heart winner; if they split 4:1, you can only make the contract by playing another Diamond (to set up North's fifth) and hoping West does not get to cash their long Heart.

7. Trick 8: Your opponent will now either lead their winning Heart, or some other suit. When you get the lead back, cash North's winning Diamond(s) and other top winners to make the contract.

West North East South
 1♦ Pass 1♠ Pass
 1NT Pass Pass Pass

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|--|
| | ♠ KT85 | | |
| | ♥ K9863 | | |
| | ♦ 87 | | |
| | ♣ Q2 | | |
| ♠ 632 | | ♠ AQ74 | |
| ♥ QJT | | ♥ 742 | |
| ♦ AKQ5 | | ♦ 43 | |
| ♣ A54 | | ♣ 9763 | |
| | ♠ J9 | | |
| | ♥ A5 | | |
| | ♦ JT962 | | |
| | ♣ KJT8 | | |

Board: 12 Dealer: West Lead: ♥6 #H132

The contract is 1NT, so you need to make 7 tricks.

Step 1: Count your top winners

- Spades: A
- Hearts: none
- Diamonds: A & K & Q
- Clubs: A

Making 5 top winners

Step 2: Find TWO extra tricks

- Promote a Heart trick by forcing out the Ace and King to get one extra trick. 100% chance
- Establish the 13th Spade by leading Spades 3 times to get one extra trick. They have to split 3:3, a 35% chance.
- Establish the 13th Club by leading Clubs 3 times to get one extra trick. They have to split 3:3, a 35% chance.
- Take the Spade finesse to make the Queen of Spades, one extra trick. A 50% chance

The best chance of two extra tricks is to combine the Spade finesse and the Heart promotion; consider establishing the 13th cards as a backup plan!

Step 3: Identify risks

- There are so many potential risks in this contract, you can't worry about them all - and not much you can do about them anyway. You may have to play some of this by the seat of your pants!
- The Heart lead suggests that this is North's long suit, headed by an Honour, so try to keep them off lead. (Assuming it's a fourth highest lead, North probably has the 8, 9, and King or Ace; not the King AND Ace, as they would lead the Ace from AKxx. They might have the 3 and 5 too.)

Step 4: Make your plan - and implement it!

1. Trick 1: Expect to lose this to the Ace or King of Hearts
2. Trick 2: Expect to lose this to the Ace or King of Hearts
3. Trick 3: The third lead will probably be a Heart, which you win with West's Queen
4. Trick 4: Lead a Spade towards East's AQ, hoping North has the King, take the finesse by playing the Queen.
5. Trick 5: If the finesse works, you can now make the contract by playing the Ace or Spades, Ace, King and Queen of Diamonds, and Ace of Clubs - then concede the remaining tricks
6. Trick 5: If the finesse doesn't work, you're in trouble! South will probably lead a Club or Diamond (Dummy's weak suits). You could play your top winners to go just one down. Or you could try to make the contract by playing 3 rounds of Clubs or Spades and hoping they split 3:3, so you can make the 13th card, but risk going down by more than one. I'd take the six certain tricks!

North East South West

1 ♣ Pass 1 ♠ Pass
 2 ♠ Pass 4 ♠ Pass
 Pass Pass

♠ AJ76
 ♥ 62
 ♦ AK2
 ♣ 7432

♠ T983
 ♥ T8
 ♦ QJT
 ♣ AQ96

♠
 ♥ QJ9543
 ♦ 9875
 ♣ KT5

♠ KQ542
 ♥ AK7
 ♦ 643
 ♣ J8

Board: 13 Dealer: North Lead: ♦Q #H521

Contract is 4S so you need to make 10 tricks.

Step 1A: Count top tricks outside trump suit (A = 1; AK = 1, AKQ = 3, etc)

Step 1B: Count certain winners in trump suit (if suit is led)

Step 2: Find extra tricks (ruff from short hand / promote / establish / finesse)

Step 3: Draw trumps (all / some /delay)

Step 4: Risks (not enough trumps / ruffed / over-ruffed / bad splits / bad finesse / entries)

Step 5: Make your plan

East South West North

1 ♥ Pass 1NT Pass
 3 ♥ Pass Pass Pass

♠ K42
 ♥ QJ652
 ♦ AQ43
 ♣ 7

♠ JT7
 ♥
 ♦ T86
 ♣ AJT9864

♠ AQ6
 ♥ AKT874
 ♦ K2
 ♣ 32

♠ 9853
 ♥ 93
 ♦ J975
 ♣ KQ5

Board: 14 Dealer: East Lead: ♠8 #H3822

The contract is 3H so you need to make 9 tricks.

Step 1A: Count top tricks outside trump suit (A = 1; AK = 1, AKQ = 3, etc)

Step 1B: Count certain winners in trump suit (if suit is led)

Step 2: Find extra tricks (ruff from short hand / promote / establish / finesse)

Step 3: Draw trumps (all / some /delay)

Step 4: Risks (not enough trumps / ruffed / over-ruffed / bad splits / bad finesse / entries)

Step 5: Make your plan

South West North East

1♦ Pass 1♥ Pass
 1NT Pass 4♥ Pass
 Pass Pass

♠ J64
 ♥ AQJ7543
 ♦ 72
 ♣ 9

♠ A9532 ♠ K7
 ♥ ♥ 9862
 ♦ KJT84 ♦ 53
 ♣ K87 ♣ QJT65

♠ QT8
 ♥ KT
 ♦ AQ96
 ♣ A432

Board: 15 Dealer: South Lead: ♣Q #H860

The contract is 4H so you need to make 10 tricks.

Step 1A: Count top tricks outside trump suit (A = 1; AK = 1, AKQ = 3, etc)

Step 1B: Count certain winners in trump suit (if suit is led)

Step 2: Find extra tricks (ruff from short hand / promote / establish / finesse)

Step 3: Draw trumps (all / some /delay)

Step 4: Risks (not enough trumps / ruffed / over-ruffed / bad splits / bad finesse / entries)

Step 5: Make your plan

West North East South

1♥ Pass 1♠ Pass
 2♣ Pass 4♥ Pass
 Pass Pass

♠ QJ83
 ♥ QT
 ♦ QT3
 ♣ 8753

♠ K4 ♠ AT765
 ♥ J9643 ♥ AK7
 ♦ KJ ♦ 842
 ♣ AQ42 ♣ JT

♠ 92
 ♥ 852
 ♦ A9765
 ♣ K96

Board: 16 Dealer: West Lead: ♦3 #H861

The contract is 4H so you need to make 10 tricks.

Step 1A: Count top tricks outside trump suit (A = 1; AK = 1, AKQ = 3, etc)

Step 1B: Count certain winners in trump suit (if suit is led)

Step 2: Find extra tricks (ruff from short hand / promote / establish / finesse)

Step 3: Draw trumps (all / some /delay)

Step 4: Risks (not enough trumps / ruffed / over-ruffed / bad splits / bad finesse / entries)

Step 5: Make your plan

North East South West

1NT Pass Pass Pass

♠ AQ
 ♥ J73
 ♦ T87
 ♣ AK952

♠ 642 ♠ KT987
 ♥ KQ95 ♥ A6
 ♦ K9 ♦ QJ63
 ♣ JT64 ♣ 87

♠ J53
 ♥ T842
 ♦ A542
 ♣ Q3

Board: 17 Dealer: North Lead: ♠T #H564

The Contract is 1NT so you need to make 7 tricks.

Step 1: Count top tricks (A = 1; AK = 1, AKQ = 3, etc)

Step 2: Find extra tricks (promote high cards / establish long suits / finesse)

Step 3: Check for risks (bad splits / finesses fail / not enough entries)

Step 4: Make your plan

East South West North

1NT Pass 3NT Pass
Pass Pass

| | | |
|--------|---------|--------|
| | ♠ K8754 | |
| | ♥ JT842 | |
| | ♦ 6 | |
| | ♣ JT | |
| ♠ QJ3 | | ♠ AT2 |
| ♥ AK7 | | ♥ Q95 |
| ♦ 982 | | ♦ A754 |
| ♣ A432 | | ♣ K87 |
| | ♠ 96 | |
| | ♥ 63 | |
| | ♦ KQJT3 | |
| | ♣ Q965 | |

South West North East

1♠ Pass 2♠ Pass
3♦ Pass 4♠ Pass
Pass Pass

| | | |
|--------|---------|--------|
| | ♠ A98 | |
| | ♥ JT932 | |
| | ♦ K | |
| | ♣ 6542 | |
| ♠ T | | ♠ 7632 |
| ♥ 8765 | | ♥ AKQ |
| ♦ AT54 | | ♦ 986 |
| ♣ KJ97 | | ♣ T83 |
| | ♠ KQJ54 | |
| | ♥ 4 | |
| | ♦ QJ732 | |
| | ♣ AQ | |

Board: 18 Dealer: East Lead: ♦K #H101

The contract is 3NT so you need 9 to make tricks.

Step 1: Count top tricks (A = 1; AK = 1, AKQ = 3, etc)

Step 2: Find extra tricks (promote high cards / establish long suits / finesse)

Step 3: Check for risks (bad splits / finesses fail / not enough entries)

Step 4: Make your plan

Board: 19 Dealer: South Lead: ♥7 #H3476

The contract is 4S so you need to make 10 tricks.

Step 1A: Count top tricks outside trump suit (A = 1; AK = 1, AKQ = 3, etc)

Step 1B: Count certain winners in trump suit (if suit is led)

Step 2: Find extra tricks (ruff from short hand / promote / establish / finesse)

Step 3: Draw trumps (all / some /delay)

Step 4: Risks (not enough trumps / ruffed / over-ruffed / bad split / bad finesse / entries)

Step 5: Make your plan