

# Practice Session for U3ABD20: Opening Leads & Defence

## Welcome!

Here is a description of all the hands that you could play in today's Practice Session. It includes details like the cards in each hand, the "correct" bidding, and guidance on how to play the hand in Defence, starting with choosing (and interpreting) the Opening Lead.

Yup, this week we focussed on defeating the contract when you are playing as a Defender, not Declarer. *The shoe is on the other foot.*

**Don't feel bad** if you bid or played the hands a bit differently, or ended up in a slightly different contract. Each week there's something new. Practice is the thing now; you're at the end of the U3A Bridge Beginner's Course - time to spread your wings a bit further maybe? We can - and will - help you with that, when you're ready.

Anyway, one last set of lessons, one last Practice Session. How did it go?

We do hope you've enjoyed our course and have learned enough to get you started - and hooked! Bridge is a great game: social, taxing, rewarding, challenging - with great depth and a variety of styles, techniques, and venues - from Kitchen Bridge to U3A Bridge Groups, from Local Bridge Clubs to Online Tournaments, Bridge Holidays, Bridge Cruises (good grief). For ultimate convenience, you can play Online or on a Bridge App on your phone - with other people or against the dreaded "AI".

Remember, you'll be playing with people who were all just starting out once, too. Have fun, make friends, exercise your brain!

-Ed

## Advanced topics

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

## Recap

In previous modules you mostly learned lots about bidding and making contracts as Declarer. This week's module is all about playing in Defence, where your aim is to defeat the contract. And, in most cases, you *could* defeat the contract, with good Defence. Much more fun!

## This Week's Lessons

For details, refer to the U3ABD20 Lesson Summary.

## The Hands

**North East South West**

2NT Pass 3♣ Pass  
 3♦ Pass 3NT Pass  
 Pass Pass

♠ Q74  
 ♥ AKQ  
 ♦ AK6  
 ♣ K832

♠ 6  
 ♥ 987632  
 ♦ Q8743  
 ♣ 6

♠ AK32  
 ♥ J4  
 ♦ J9  
 ♣ T9754

♠ JT985  
 ♥ T5  
 ♦ T52  
 ♣ AQJ

**Board: 1 Dealer: North Lead: ♠J #419**

East makes a safe attacking lead in the form of ♠J, top of a four-card sequence. Dummy wins with ♠K, West following with ♠6 and Declarer with ♠4. At trick 2 Declarer runs Dummy's ♣T to East's ♣J. What should East lead to trick 3?

It would be a serious mistake to cash ♣A. This would allow Declarer to make three Club tricks, eleven in all. East should continue their attack on Spades by leading ♠T. Dummy wins with ♠A and West discards ♥2.

Declarer plays a Club to ♣K and East's ♣A. What should East lead to trick 5?

It's still wrong for East to play their Club winner, they must lead Spades again – to set up their ♠85 as winners when they get back on lead with ♣Q

Declarer cashes ♥AKQ, on which East plays their low Hearts and discards ♦2. Declarer continues with ♦AK, but has to concede the rest. Despite having 30 points, Declarer goes one down.

The Defence achieved this by leading Spades at every opportunity. Declarer didn't have time to set up their Clubs before East had set up their Spades.

**East South West North**

1NT Pass 3NT Pass  
 Pass Pass

♠ J98742  
 ♥ 975  
 ♦ 73  
 ♣ 86

♠ 653  
 ♥ A84  
 ♦ QJT64  
 ♣ AK

♠ QT  
 ♥ T32  
 ♦ AK8  
 ♣ QJ542

♠ AK  
 ♥ KQJ6  
 ♦ 952  
 ♣ T973

**Board: 2 Dealer: East Lead: ♣4 #510**

South has 12 points so doesn't expect much help from Partner. Can they find an opening lead that offers a chance?

A 5-card suit is often a good attacking lead against a NT contract. South leads their 4th highest Club because they have a Club Honour but don't have a sequence or near-sequence of three high cards.

Declarer wins the opening lead in Dummy, enters hand with ♥K, and continues with ♦2. Should South play high or low? It would be a mistake for South to let Dummy win a Diamond trick as Declarer probably has enough top winners in the other suits to make the contract.

So South should play ♦A or ♦K – but which? They should play the ♦K to tell Partner they probably have the Ace. South then plays ♣2 to knock out Dummy's second Club stopper, wins the next Diamond and cashes ♣QJ5 to defeat the contract.

South defeated the contract by leading their fourth highest from their 5-card suit and subsequently winning ♦AK to set up and cash their long suit.

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♦	Pass	3♣	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

♠ 64	
♥ AK854	
♦ J4	
♣ KQ43	
♠ Q9732	♠ JT5
♥ T2	♥ QJ976
♦ AQ5	♦ 72
♣ T75	♣ J98
♠ AK8	
♥ 3	
♦ KT9863	
♣ A62	

**Board: 3 Dealer: South Lead: ♠3 #511**

West's ♦AQ over the suit bid by Declarer's looks like the key to defeating this 3NT contract. Which opening lead provides the best chance? Not Diamonds!

A 5-card suit is often a good attacking lead against a NT contract so West leads ♠3 (fourth highest as they have an Honour); they don't have a sequence or near-sequence of three high cards.

At trick 1 East plays ♠T and Declarer wins with ♠K. Declarer continues with ♣2 to Dummy's ♣K, East following suit with ♣8. Declarer next runs ♦J to West's ♦Q.

Which card should West lead to trick 4?

Declarer would have won the first trick with ♠J rather than ♠K if they had the Jack so East must have it, so West can continue Spades safely. There's no reason to lead a Spade higher than ♠2, you can rely on Partner to play their J, high in 3<sup>rd</sup> position.

Declarer allows East's ♠J to hold the trick. East returns Partner's opening suit: another Spade, won by South with ♠A. South leads ♦8 to continue setting up their long suit. Should West play high or low?

West doesn't need to play low, as they now have three winners to cash and defeat the contract, so they play ♦A and their two winning Spades.

Declarer easily has the rest, but the Defence has already taken five tricks and defeated the contract.

West defeated the contract by opening with their long suit and continuing it when Declarer's play at trick 1 made it clear that they didn't have ♠J, so Partner must!

West	North	East	South
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

♠ QT3	
♥ QJT82	
♦ KQ7	
♣ 96	
♠ J96	♠ AK4
♥ A765	♥ K9
♦ AJ52	♦ T9864
♣ KJ	♣ A73
♠ 8752	
♥ 43	
♦ 3	
♣ QT8542	

**Board: 4 Dealer: West Lead: ♥Q #519**

Which opening lead should North make to give the Defence the best chance of defeating this 3NT contract?

The best opening lead is from North's strong 5 card suit. They have a sequence of three Honours, so they lead the highest of these, rather than fourth best. This tells Partner (and, sadly, Declarer) that they have a 3-card sequence.

Dummy's ♥K wins the first trick. Declarer continues by running ♦T around to North's ♦Q. Which card should North lead to trick 3?

The play to the first trick indicates that Declarer holds ♥A (Partner would have covered the King if they had the Ace), but Dummy's now-bare 9 means that North can safely use their remaining ♥JT8 to set up at least two tricks in the suit. It doesn't matter which Honour they lead, just don't lead the 8!

Declarer wins in hand and leads ♦A followed by ♦J. North wins with ♦K and cashes their two remaining Hearts to defeat the contract.

North defeated the contract by starting with the top of their sequence in their longest suit and playing it again from the top when back on lead.

North	East	South	West
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass
	♠ AJ		
	♥ AKJ74		
	♦ AJ9		
	♣ J32		
♠ 72			♠ K984
♥ 862			♥ 5
♦ K73			♦ QT54
♣ AQ754			♣ T986
	♠ QT653		
	♥ QT93		
	♦ 862		
	♣ K		

**Board: 5 Dealer: North Lead: ♣T #123**

East leads Clubs as it's safer than leading away from their unsupported Honours in Spades or Diamonds. A trump lead looks too passive; the opposition have bid Hearts strongly, they aren't short of them. So East leads ♣T, the top of a 3-card sequence in one of their longer suits.

West overtakes South's ♣K with ♣A but how can the Defence find 3 more tricks to defeat the contract?

Should they lead a Spade? If East has ♠A or ♠K they will win a trick with that card whether or not West leads a Spade now. However, if East has some points in Diamonds, West needs to attack this suit straight away (before Declarer discards losing Diamonds on the long Spade suit), so they lead a low Diamond towards Dummy's weakness.

In general, it's a good idea to lead towards weakness like this, rather than toward strength.

If you've read the notes on [leads](#), a low card lead like this *suggests* to Partner that you have 3 cards to an Honour - which is exactly what West has.

Declarer plays ♦9 and East wins with ♦T. East returns a Diamond to West's ♦K and Declarer's ♦A. After drawing some trumps Declarer takes the Spade finesse, but East wins with their King and cashes ♦Q to defeat the contract by one trick.

West defeated the contract by switching to Dummy's weak suit at trick 2; leading a low Diamond in order to retain ♦K for Partner's Diamond continuation.

Declarer had to try the Spade finesse, but went down when it lost and East was able to cash ♦Q.

East	South	West	North
1♥	Pass	4♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		
	♠ KJ762		
	♥ KQ		
	♦ KT8		
	♣ KT8		
♠ Q		♠ A5	
♥ T8643		♥ AJ9752	
♦ 754		♦ QJ6	
♣ AQ75		♣ 43	
	♠ T9843		
	♥		
	♦ A932		
	♣ J962		

**Board: 6 Dealer: East Lead: ♠T #169**

South leads ♠T, the top of a 3-card sequence - a fairly passive but safe lead. You don't in general want to lead an Ace without support, or any unsupported Honour - even a Jack!

When North sees Dummy it seems that Partner's Spade lead hasn't helped much, but the Defence might still be able to take four tricks in the other suits if South can provide a little help.

North covers Dummy's ♠Q with the ♠K and Declarer wins with ♠A. Declarer ruffs a Spade in Dummy, plays a Heart to ♥A and then loses a Heart to North. South is void in Hearts and discards ♠4 followed by ♠8. What should North lead to trick 5?

Declarer has deliberately put North on lead in the hope of gaining an advantage from their next lead. Sucker! Can North find a safe lead?

There's one Spade left, ♠9 but who has it? If South has it, North must NOT lead a Spade as that would allow Declarer to ruff in one hand and discard from the other, giving them an extra trick! And it's clear that South must hold that card, since they wouldn't (shouldn't) lead ♠T from ♠T843.

North therefore has to lead from KT8 in Diamonds or KT8 in Clubs - but which? Obviously, leading a Club round to Dummy's ♣AQ would give Declarer a trick, a "free finesse"; North wants to play their Club King on that Queen.

So that leaves Diamonds. Even if leading a Diamond makes East take a finesse, they would do that anyway once they get to Dummy, so a Diamond lead can't give away a trick.

When Declarer plays ♦J South wins with ♦A and returns the suit to North's ♦K. North exits safely with their last Diamond and later wins the vital fourth trick with ♣K when Declarer finesses ♣Q. Declarer needs the Club finesse, so they go down one.

North defeated the contract by playing Diamonds each time they were on lead. Declarer was able to win the third round with ♦Q, but by playing safely (not leading a Club) North was able to defeat the contract eventually with ♣K.

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	4♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		
	♠ KJT		
	♥ KJ643		
	♦ 53		
	♣ A96		
♠ 8543		♠ AQ72	
♥ 2		♥ A	
♦ QJT8		♦ 9764	
♣ K872		♣ JT53	
	♠ 96		
	♥ QT9875		
	♦ AK2		
	♣ Q4		

**Board: 7 Dealer: South Lead: ♦ Q #514**

West leads ♦ Q, the top of a 3-card perfect sequence. This is a good, safe attacking lead as they have two others; much safer than leading away from the unsupported ♣ K and more attacking than leading a small Spade.

With ♠ K in Dummy East can see three likely defensive winners and has to hope that Partner can provide a fourth to defeat the contract.

Declarer beats Partner's ♦ Q opening lead with ♦ A and leads a Spade to Dummy's ♠ J. After winning with ♠ Q, what should East lead to trick 3?

East can still hope to win tricks with ♠ AQ and ♥ A, but Partner's opening lead of ♦ Q shows that Declarer has ♦ K. A third round of Diamonds would be trumped, so East has to hope for a fourth defensive trick in Clubs; hope that West has ♣ K. It's important to lead Clubs now rather than later because Declarer might be able to discard a losing Club on a third round of Spades.

East leads ♣ J to tell Partner they have ♣ T, so they know to cover the ♣ Q if it's played. Declarer covers the Jack with, ♣ Q, West covers with ♣ K and Dummy's ♣ A takes the trick – setting up East's ♣ T.

East wins the next Spade and cashes ♣ T. East eventually wins ♥ A to defeat the contract by one trick.

East realised from Partner's ♦ Q opening lead that Declarer must hold ♦ K, so didn't make the mistake of returning the suit. Instead they appreciated the risk of a discard on Dummy's Spades and switched to ♣ J in order to quickly set up a trick in that suit.

West	North	East	South
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		
	♠ 86		
	♥ 9832		
	♦ 74		
	♣ AT852		
♠ AT2		♠ KQ74	
♥ AJ4		♥ Q65	
♦ 9632		♦ AQJT5	
♣ KJ9		♣ 6	
	♠ J953		
	♥ KT7		
	♦ K8		
	♣ Q743		

**Board: 8 Dealer: West Lead: ♣5 #41**

North makes their best lead against a NT contract; fourth highest from their longest suit: ♣5.

East and West have reached 3NT after a Stayman auction, so South knows they've shared some useful information! From the bidding, West has 12-14 points and no 4 card major. Dummy has 14 points. South has 9 points, so North must have 3-5 points. Phew!

When North leads ♣5, South is pleased to see that Dummy has only a singleton. South plays "third hand high" with ♣Q and Declarer wins with ♣K. At trick 2, Declarer takes the losing Diamond finesse and South wins with ♦K.

It's easy to see that South should return a Club, but which one? North would really like to know how many Clubs West has. The way to tell them is to lead ♣3, your (original) fourth highest. Why? This is a bit advanced:

*With three Clubs remaining South correctly returns ♣3, their original fourth highest. North now knows that South started with two or four Clubs. After beating Declarer's ♣9 with ♣T North assumes the latter and continues with ♣A to drop Declarer's ♣J. After this good Defence Declarer goes one down.*

*If South had returned ♣7 at trick 3 (thinking that this would make no difference) North would have assumed that South started with three Clubs and tried to put South on lead for a further Club lead through Declarer. Declarer would then finish with at least ten tricks. We manage to take 5 of the first 6 tricks to defeat the contract. The key play was returning ♣3 at trick 4, our original 4th highest, so Partner knows they can cash their remaining Clubs without trying to put us on lead again.*

If you aren't using (and understanding) signals like this, South leads a small Club, North beats West's 9 with the T, and then has to guess whether West has J, Jx or Jxx.

North	East	South	West
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass
	♠ AJ3		
	♥ 7		
	♦ AKJ63		
	♣ QT32		
♠ 9875		♠ K6	
♥ KJT85		♥ A643	
♦ QT		♦ 87	
♣ 54		♣ J9876	
	♠ QT42		
	♥ Q92		
	♦ 9542		
	♣ AK		

**Board: 9 Dealer: North Lead: ♥J #89**

West wants to lead their 5-card suit; this is usually the best tactic against a NT contract. But which card? If they had a solid sequence such as KQJxx, they would lead the top, but they have a sequence with a gap, KJTxx – this is known as an **internal sequence**. With an internal sequence, you lead the high card below the gap. So West leads ♥J.

When Declarer has limited their point count by a NT bid, you can work out the number of points that can be held by Partner. Here Dummy has 15, East has 8, Declarer has shown 11-12, so West probably has 5-6.

West's opening lead of a Jack looks like the top of a sequence, but if West has ♥JT9x(x), the Defence is unlikely to beat this contract whatever East does.

But if West's lead was from an interior sequence - ♥KJTxx - East needs to play ♥A to stop Declarer making a trick with ♥Q.

As this looks like the only way to beat the contract, East wins the first trick with ♥A and returns ♥3, their original fourth highest, hoping West has that internal sequence. This enables West to cash four Heart tricks to defeat the contract.

East defeated this contract by realising that the only way to defeat it was to assume that Partner had ♥K as part of an internal sequence and play ♥A on the first round. They also helped clarify the situation for Partner by returning ♥3, their original 4th highest, at trick 2.

East	South	West	North
Pass	1♠	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			
	♠ AJ97		
	♥ A63		
	♦ 432		
	♣ Q85		
♠ KQ		♠ 32	
♥ Q98		♥ T42	
♦ Q875		♦ JT6	
♣ T743		♣ KJ962	
	♠ T8654		
	♥ KJ75		
	♦ AK9		
	♣ A		

**Board: 10 Dealer: East Lead: ♦5 #297**

West leads Diamonds because it's the safest suit, a moderately attacking lead. Clubs looks unlikely to make a trick, Hearts would mean leading away from an unsupported Honour, rarely a good idea, and Spades would help Declarer figure out how to play their trump suit! West leads ♦3 because it's their fourth highest, although that's less important in a Suit contract.

When Dummy is revealed, East finds it difficult to assess defensive prospects on this hand. Partner will probably need to be strong in the red suits if the Defence is to defeat this contract. In the meantime, which Diamond should East play to trick 1?

It's very important for East to play ♦T, not ♦J. Why?

In general, when following suit a Defender should play the lowest card from a sequence. This may help Partner work out your holding, especially when combined with Declarer's subsequent play. When you play a high card, Partner knows that you don't have the card immediately below it - but may have card(s) above it.

Note 1: this doesn't violate the "Third Hand Plays High" rule as all the cards in a sequence have the same value

Note 2: this rule is the opposite to leading a suit, where Defender plays the highest card from a sequence.

Declarer wins the first trick with ♦A and plays two rounds of trumps. West wins the second round with ♠KQ and continues Diamonds to East's ♦J and Declarer's ♦K. West knows East has the Jack because Declarer would have taken the first trick with the Jack (rather than the Ace) if they had the Jack.

West later gets on lead with ♥Q and cashes ♦Q, after which Declarer claims the rest.

The contract makes exactly, but the Defence managed to prevent an overtrick by attacking Diamonds, thanks to East's play of ♦T to the first trick. If East had made the mistake of playing ♦J (denying ♦T) West would have switched to Clubs at trick 4 and Declarer would have made eleven tricks.

East playing ♦T at trick 1 (not the Jack) was the key to correct Defence, as it showed West that they had the Jack, so West could safely lead a second Diamond to set up their Queen.

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		
	♠ AT9		
	♥ AQ3		
	♦ 976		
	♣ A865		
♠ K42		♠ Q876	
♥ T765		♥ 42	
♦ AT83		♦ KJ5	
♣ JT		♣ 9732	
	♠ J53		
	♥ KJ98		
	♦ Q42		
	♣ KQ4		

**Board: 11 Dealer: South Lead: ♦ 3 #15**

In a NT contract, it's often best to lead your longest suit. West has two 4-card suits, Hearts and Diamonds. They choose Diamonds as the suit is stronger (headed by an Ace), so they lead their fourth highest: ♦ 3. (You lead the fourth highest if the suit includes an Honour.)

When Dummy goes down, East counts the points: South's bid shows 12-14 points, Dummy has 14 points, and East has 6 points, leaving West with 6-8 points. At trick 1 East knows little else about the hands. For example: West's Diamonds could be as weak as ♦ Txxx or as strong as ♦ AQxxx.

East plays third hand high with ♦ K, which holds the trick. They return Partner's suit (usually a good idea), continuing with ♦ J, the higher of their remaining cards. This serves to unblock the suit and also tells West that they started with 2 or 3 Diamonds – with 4 they would return their fourth highest.

The Defence cash four tricks in Diamonds, Declarer and Dummy each discarding Spades. When West switches to ♣ J Declarer wins in hand with ♣ K and cashes four Heart tricks, throwing a second Spade from Dummy.

East realises that Declarer has ♣ Q and that Dummy's Clubs are a threat, so they retain all their Clubs and discard Spades down to singleton ♠ Q. Declarer then has to concede the last trick to East's ♣ 9.

The Defence defeat this contract because of East's correct play in Diamonds at the start of the hand, and careful discards near the end.

#### ADDITIONAL (ADVANCED) DISCUSSION

Unblocking means playing a high card for the express purpose of making sure you don't take the lead from Partner at the worst possible time. This usually happens in NT, when Partner is leading their long suit.

For example: assume you have Qxx in Clubs and Partner has AKJxx. If Partner plays A and K, then another, your Q will win but Partner is no longer on lead and can't cash their two remaining Clubs. In this situation, you need to unblock by playing the Q earlier, when Partner leads their A or K.

It's a bit scary; what if Partner has AKxxx and Declarer has Jxx? You've just given them a trick! Unblocking is a lot less risky if Declarer has already run out of Clubs!

Of course the easiest way to handle this example would be for you to lead the Queen first, then exit with a low Club to Partner's AKxxx. But you might not get that chance.

West	North	East	South
1♠	1NT	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	
	♠ AQ4		
	♥ JT83		
	♦ K2		
	♣ AK97		
♠ KJ862			♠ T5
♥ A9			♥ 7642
♦ A863			♦ 954
♣ J4			♣ T863
	♠ 973		
	♥ KQ5		
	♦ QJT7		
	♣ Q52		

**Board: 12 Dealer: West Lead: ♠T #47**

West has bid Spades, so East's opening lead is easy: Partner's suit. They chose ♠T so they can signal they have two (by playing high then low - called petering) so partner can count Declarer's Spades.

Before playing to the first trick West tries to understand Partner's lead. Dummy's ♠9 means that it can't be top of a sequence or an interior sequence. With ♠ATx or ♠QTx East would have led low. With ♠AT or ♠QT alone East would have led the higher card (to unblock). East must therefore have a singleton ♠T or ♠Tx.

In this situation you ignore "Third Hand Plays High". If East has a singleton ♠T, then West can only set up their suit if Declarer makes the mistake of winning the first round. If East has ♠Tx, West needs to save their ♠KJ for the later rounds. **East can however afford to encourage (signal) with ♠8, since even if Declarer has 4 Spades, their ♠6 will be available to win the 4th round of the suit.**

Declarer allows ♠T to win the first trick, hoping that East has a singleton.

East has another Spade so they lead it, Declarer wins the second trick with ♠Q and leads ♦K.

It's often right to duck the first round in these situations, but not here. West plays ♦A at trick 3 and leads a Spade to remove ♠A.

Now, Declarer has made 2 tricks in Spades (AQ), and can make three tricks in Clubs (AKQ) and 3 tricks in Diamonds, but when they lead a Heart, West plays the Ace and cashes their two Spades; the contract is one down.

Defence made two good decisions on this hand: in trick 1, West played low on Partner's ♠T. Then West played ♦A at trick 3 so they could flush out ♠A, preventing Declarer from making more than 3 tricks in the red suits.

North	East	South	West
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		
	♠ AKT5		
	♥ K972		
	♦ AJ		
	♣ Q64		
♠ J8		♠ 96	
♥ Q643		♥ T5	
♦ T75		♦ K9842	
♣ K983		♣ AJ72	
	♠ Q7432		
	♥ AJ8		
	♦ Q63		
	♣ T5		

**Board: 13 Dealer: North Lead: ♣3 #101**

West leads their fourth highest Club, ♣3, hoping to promote the King.

East sees that Dummy is maximum in terms of high cards, but their own cards in the minor suits are well-placed for the Defence.

Declarer plays low from Dummy at trick 1. Which card should East play?

West's opening lead of ♣3 is their lowest Club, so they must have 3 or 4 Clubs, headed by ♣K or ♣T. Whatever their holding, it's right to play ♣J at trick 1, reserving the Ace for Dummy's Queen. This is called "finessing against Dummy". If South has ♣K, East should be able to make ♣A later, without setting up Dummy's ♣Q. (Unless of course South has a singleton King.)

In practice East's ♣J wins the first trick. They continue with a low Club to West's ♣K. Perhaps West should switch to a Diamond, but they play a third round of Clubs and Declarer ruffs.

Declarer draws two rounds of trumps ending in hand and finesses Dummy's ♦J, losing to East's ♦K. East can't lead the remaining Club as this would concede a ruff and discard (giving Declarer an extra trick), while a Heart lead will probably also help Declarer.

East therefore exits safely with a Diamond and in due course West wins the setting trick in Hearts.

East's first good play was at trick 1, playing ♣J instead of ♣A, so Declarer could not set up Dummy's ♣Q and discard their losing Heart on it.

East also made a sensible passive return of a Diamond at trick 7 rather than a Heart, which would have given Declarer a risk-free finesse of West's Queen.

East	South	West	North
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass
	♠ AJ654		
	♥ 8		
	♦ 632		
	♣ Q632		
♠ KQ		♠ 8	
♥ K7543		♥ AT62	
♦ J54		♦ AKQT9	
♣ 954		♣ AJ7	
	♠ T9732		
	♥ QJ9		
	♦ 87		
	♣ KT8		

**Board: 14 Dealer: East Lead: ♣2 #118**

North makes the moderately active lead of their fourth highest Club, ♣2, hoping to promote their Queen. Leading away from ♠AJ is far too likely to lose a trick.

South sees Dummy go down with a powerful hand, but at least North has found the best suit for their opening lead. Declarer plays ♣7 from Dummy. Which Club should South play?

North's ♣2 lead is almost certainly low from an Honour (3 or 4+). It can't be a singleton or West would have a 6 card Club suit, which they would have bid! If North didn't have an Honour in Clubs, they would have led their second highest, not their lowest. They can see the A and J in Dummy, so there's only one "missing" Honour in Clubs, the Queen. North must have it! South can therefore play ♣T, knowing that it will win the trick. This is called 'Finessing Against Dummy'.

At trick 2 South leads ♣K to knock out Dummy's ♣A - promoting North's Q. Declarer cashes plays ♥AK and three rounds of Diamonds. South ruffs the third round and leads a Club to North's ♣Q. North's ♠A is the setting trick.

South defeated this contract by understanding North's opening lead which allowed them to safely "finesse against Dummy" at trick 1. They also ruffed the 3rd round of Diamonds (with ♥Q), so they could make the Club trick before Declarer could discard their losing Club on Dummy's Diamonds.

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass
	♠ KJ84		
	♥ A9832		
	♦ 6		
	♣ 854		
♠ 3		♠ QT9	
♥ 7654		♥ JT	
♦ KQJ83		♦ AT954	
♣ K97		♣ JT3	
	♠ A7652		
	♥ KQ		
	♦ 72		
	♣ AQ62		

**Board: 15 Dealer: South Lead: ♦ K #264**

West has a perfect sequence in Diamonds, so leads the top of that sequence, ♦ K.

East can see they will make a Spade and a Diamond. Can they make two more? Which card should East play at trick 1?

As often happens, the crucial defensive play comes at the first trick. Declarer will try to use Dummy's Hearts for discards, so the Defence need to attack Clubs NOW. This would be a lot safer for East, as Dummy has very weak Clubs (play through strength, not up to it). East therefore overtakes Partner's opening lead i.e. plays ♦ A so they can lead Clubs. (It's only OK to squander Diamond Honours like this, as Declarer will ruff the next round!)

At trick 2 East must lead a Club Honour (Jack or Ten) to prevent Declarer from ducking the trick to West.

Declarer wins with ♣ A, cashes ♠ A and leads a Spade to Dummy's ♠ K, West discarding ♦ 3. Declarer plays a Heart to ♥ K, cashes ♥ Q, enters Dummy with a Diamond ruff and continues with ♥ 8.

East has remembered that this card is a winner, so ruffs it and plays another Club. West wins two tricks in Clubs and the contract goes one down.

East defeated this contract by overtaking Partner's ♦ K at trick 1 in order to play Clubs through Declarer. They also had to be alert and ruff Dummy's Hearts at the first opportunity.

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	
	♠ AQ432		
	♥ AQ		
	♦ QT7		
	♣ 543		
♠ 6		♠ 97	
♥ K86532		♥ T4	
♦ AJ4		♦ K98532	
♣ AJT		♣ 986	
	♠ KJT85		
	♥ J97		
	♦ 6		
	♣ KQ72		

**Board: 16 Dealer: West Lead: ♥ T #372**

West has bid Hearts, so East leads Partner's suit, playing ♥ T intending to play high-low, signalling a doubleton. Perhaps they can get a ruff?

East's ♥ T is covered by Dummy's ♥ J. Which card should West play?

With Dummy having ♥ 9, East's lead must be a singleton or the higher card from a doubleton. In the former case it doesn't matter what West does, but if East has ♥ T4 then Declarer has doubleton ♥ AQ. West therefore plays low. *West starts a high-low signal to show an even number of cards, although it doesn't really matter which low card they play. (West can't be showing a doubleton, they opened 1H!)*

Declarer wins with ♥ Q, draws trumps and plays a Club to Dummy's ♣ K. West wins with ♣ A, returns ♣ J and later makes tricks with ♣ T and ♦ A.

The contract makes exactly, the Defence can't do any better than this but they could do worse! If West had covered ♥ J with ♥ K in trick 1 this would have set up Dummy's ♥ 9 as a winner. Declarer could then discard a losing Club on it and make an overtrick.

This time the opening lead didn't help the Defence, but West did avoid giving away an overtrick by realising that it would be wrong to cover Dummy's ♥ J at trick 1. It isn't always about getting a contract down, sometimes it's about limiting the overtricks.

North	East	South	West
1♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass
	♠ K4		
	♥ AJ965		
	♦ AQ95		
	♣ 62		
♠ QJ7			♠ A98
♥ 73			♥ 82
♦ 864			♦ T732
♣ 87543			♣ AKT9
	♠ T6532		
	♥ KQT4		
	♦ KJ		
	♣ QJ		

**Board: 17 Dealer: North Lead: ♣A #114**

East decides to lead ♣A as it's rarely wrong to lead from an AK combination. They lead the Ace, rather than the King, because Partner would assume the King was the top of a sequence – and might even be void and ruff it, thinking it was a loser!

When Dummy comes down with ♣QJ doubleton East naturally cashes ♣K (although you could argue that this helps Declarer by setting up a ruff).

What should East lead to trick 3?

North might have ♠Qx ♥AJ9xxx ♦A ♣xxxx, in which case Defence should cash their 2 Spade tricks now, before Declarer can discard their losing Spades. However, leading ♠A would only work against this exact hand – and it's not that likely.

It's much more likely that North has 2 or more Diamonds, in which case East might be able to defeat the contract by retaining the ♠A. East therefore chooses a safer, passive lead: a trump. By not leading a Spade, the Defence is more likely to take 2 Spade tricks later.

Declarer plays on the red suits for a while but eventually has to lead a Spade towards their ♠K. West plays their Jack, covered by the King and East wins with ♠A. East then returns a Spade to West's ♠Q and the contract goes one down.

East defeated this contract by not panicking at trick 3, making a passive trump lead and then waiting for Declarer to lead Spades and give the Defence two Spade tricks. Patience.

East	South	West	North
1♥	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	
	♠ A9842		
	♥ A7		
	♦ KJ3		
	♣ 974		
♠ 53			♠ K6
♥ 64			♥ QJT92
♦ T865			♦ AQ42
♣ Q8632			♣ T5
	♠ QJT7		
	♥ K853		
	♦ 97		
	♣ AKJ		

**Board: 18 Dealer: East Lead: ♥Q #418**

West didn't respond to East's 1♥ opening bid, so they must have less than 6 points. They might still have enough to help defeat this contract.

East has a safe, attacking opening lead in ♥Q, top of a four-card perfect sequence.

Dummy's ♥K wins the first trick, West playing ♥6 and Declarer ♥7. At trick 2 Declarer tries a finesse, runs Dummy's ♠Q to East's ♠K. What should East lead for trick 3?

East leads ♥J hoping West's ♥6 is a singleton so they can ruff the Heart, then lead Diamonds for East to make their ♦AQ. If it isn't a singleton, no harm done.

Declarer wins with ♥A and draws the remaining trumps by leading to Dummy's ♠J. At trick 5 Dummy's ♦9 is covered by West's ♦T, Declarer's ♦J and East's ♦Q. What should East lead to trick 6?

It might seem tempting to cash ♦A at this point, but if North had ♣Qxxx they would have cashed all four Clubs rather than leading a Diamond. There's therefore no danger of East losing the ♦A, so there's no rush to play it.

Indeed, cashing ♦A set up Declarer's ♦K. No rush! East gets off lead safely by leading ♥T (although a Club lead would be equally good).

Declarer ruffs and plays a Club to ♣K. Dummy's ♦7 is covered by West's ♦8, Declarer's ♦K and East's ♦A. East plays another top Heart and West eventually wins another trick with ♣K for one down.

This is a good example of passive Defence. East didn't have to attack Clubs to set up West's ♣Q, they just had to avoid giving Declarer an easy trick in Diamonds. East defeated the contract by just leading Hearts every time they got on lead - avoided giving away the vital trick in Diamonds. (They could have defended equally safely by

leading Clubs.)

South	West	North	East
Pass	1♣	Pass	2NT
Pass	4♣	Pass	Pass
Pass			
	♠ 75		
	♥ J964		
	♦ T72		
	♣ AK86		
♠ AKJ64		♠ QT92	
♥ 87		♥ AQ	
♦ A963		♦ KJ85	
♣ Q5		♣ J32	
	♠ 83		
	♥ KT532		
	♦ Q4		
	♣ T974		

**Board: 19 Dealer: South Lead: ♣A #574**

North has an obvious, safe opening lead with ♣A, on which South plays ♣4 and Declarer ♣5. This allows them to see Dummy and is very unlikely to give away a trick (as they still have KJ).

What should North lead to trick 2?

North can see that South's ♣4 is the lowest Club available, so it's probably signalling discouragement; South probably hasn't got ♣Qxx or ♣xxx, so doesn't want another Club lead.

This bit is complicated!

Sometimes it's best to continue with the King after cashing the Ace, if you fear that Declarer will discard the suit and ruff your King if you delay - but not here. There's nowhere for Declarer to dispose of their Club loser. North should therefore switch to another suit. Which suit? Leading a Heart could promote their Jack if South has ♥K. If South's strength is in Diamonds there's no rush to switch to that suit.

So North leads a low Heart, Declarer tries ♥Q (finessing the King), but South wins with ♥K and returns a Club to North's ♣K. What now?

If South has ♦A or a trump trick then the contract will go down whatever North does. But if South's highest card is ♦Q then it's important for North to defend passively. Switching back to Hearts is the most obvious action at this point, but a Spade or Club is equally good - North just needs to avoid playing a Diamond.

Declarer wins trick 4 with Dummy's ♥A and draws two rounds of trumps. They then plays the Diamonds in logical fashion by cashing ♦A and finessing into South's ♦Qx to go one down.

If North had switched to a Diamond (at trick 2 or trick 4) Declarer would make three tricks in Diamonds rather than two and make the contract.

North got the contract down by playing well at tricks 2 and 4; by recognising Partner's ♣4 as a discouraging card and making the logical switch to Hearts. Then, when North won the third trick they defended passively instead of helping Declarer with a Diamond switch.

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	1♠	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	
	♠ 963		
	♥ AKJT		
	♦ Q9872		
	♣ A		
♠ 52		♠ KQJ84	
♥ 87532		♥ 96	
♦ 63		♦ KJ5	
♣ K952		♣ T84	
	♠ AT7		
	♥ Q4		
	♦ AT4		
	♣ QJ763		

**Board: 20 Dealer: West Lead: ♠5 #443**

East has bid Spades, so West leads their Partner's suit - usually the best lead again a NT contract. They lead ♠5 so they can show they have just two Spades on the next round (by playing the ♠3 i.e. the high-low signal).

Which Spade should East play to trick 1?

When Partner leads a suit you play the lowest of touching cards in a sequence. This tells Partner you don't have the next card down and may help them deduce something about your higher cards.

East therefore plays ♠J at trick 1. When this holds the trick, they continue with ♠K (when you lead from your sequence, you lead the highest card). South wins with ♠A, West following suit.

Declarer crosses to Dummy with ♥J in order to lead ♦2. Which Diamond should East play to trick 4?

East has three winning Spades to cash, so they want to get on lead as quickly as possible, to make those tricks and (maybe) squeeze Declarer. East therefore plays ♦J to force out Declarer's ♦A. If East plays low Declarer might get a cheap trick with ♦T.

Declarer wins with ♦A and tries another Diamond, but East wins with ♦K and cashes their three Spade tricks to defeat the contract by one.

East defeated this contract by playing ♦J when Declarer led ♦2 from Dummy. This ensured that Declarer could make only one trick in Diamonds without losing the lead. When they try to set up their suit by knocking out ♦K, East is on lead again and cashes three Spades to defeat the contract.

## Summary

Commentary Synopsis					
U3ABD20					
		Lead	Hand #	Declarer / Defender	
1	N	JS	419	Defender	
2	E	4C	510	Defender	
3	S	3S	511	Defender	
4	W	QH	519	Defender	
5	N	4H	123	Defender	
6	E	4H	169	Defender	
7	S	4H,	514	Defender	
8	W	5C	41	Defender	
9	N	JH	89	Defender	
10	E	5D	297	Defender	
11	S	3D	15	Defender	
12	W	10S	47	Defender	
13	N	3C	101	Defender	
14	E	2C	118	Defender	
15	S	KD	264	Defender	
16	W	TH	372	Defender	
17	N	AC	114	Defender	
18	E	QH	418	Defender	
19	S	AC	574	Defender	
20	W	5S	443	Defender	