

Practice Session for U3ABDa03: Trump Contracts in MiniBridge

Contents

Practice Session for U3ABDa03: Trump Contracts in MiniBridge.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Welcome!	2
Green Text.....	2
Choosing a Trump Contract.....	2
Choosing a suit.....	2
Why choose a Game contract?	2
Do I need 25+ points for a Game contract?	3
Shortage Points	3
Playing in a Trump Contract.....	4
Card play	4
Extra tricks	4
Ruff from the short hand!.....	4
Drawing trumps.....	4
The Practice Hands	4
Drawing trumps and cashing top tricks (Hands 1-4).....	5
Ruffing for extra tricks (Hands 5-8)	7
Cross-ruffing for extra tricks (Hands 9-12)	9
Promoting high cards for extra tricks (Hands 13-16).....	12
Trickier hands (Hands 17-32)	14

Introduction

Welcome!

Here is a description of all the hands that you could play in today's Practice Session. It includes details like the cards and points in each hand, the correct contract, and the best lead.

Don't feel bad if you chose a different contract or lead, or played it quite differently. You're just getting started, it's all new - of course it will take you a while to get the hang of all of it. Hopefully it will make a bit more sense with the detailed explanations given here.

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

-Ed

Green Text

Anything in green is optional reading, so feel free to ignore it for now, or dive in if you're feeling brave.

Choosing a Trump Contract

Today we're asking Declarer to choose a TRUMP contract, not a No Trump contract. You take turns to be Dealer in MiniBridge (and Bridge). In MiniBridge, Dealer is always Declarer, so take turns to choose and play contracts.

Choosing a suit

There are 4 different suits, so you can choose Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts or Spades as trumps, playing in a Club, Diamond, Heart or Spade contract. They score differently! Clubs and Diamonds (the **MINORS**) score 20 points a trick you make (more than 6), while Hearts and Spades (the **MAJORS**) score 30 points a trick.

For example:

- Choose 1C and make 7 (6+1) tricks to score 70: 20 for one Club trick plus 50, the part score bonus
- Choose 1C and make 8 (6+2) tricks to score 90: 40 for two Club tricks plus 50
- Choose 1H and make 7 (6+1) tricks to score 80: 30 for one Heart trick plus 50
- Choose 1H and make 8 (6+2) tricks to score 110: 60 for two Heart tricks plus 50

To make a game (and the 300 point game bonus) you must choose and make a contract that scores at least 100 points, so:

- To make a minor game, you must make 11 tricks: 5C or 5D ($5 \times 20 = 100$) - scores 400
- To make a major game, you must make 10 tricks: 4H or 4S ($4 \times 30 = 120$) - scores 420

So if you can choose between a minor contract and a major contract, choose the major, because your tricks are worth more and it's easier to make game. The minors are second-class citizens!

As Declarer, you can see your own hand and your partner's hand, again **this week!** This is very helpful.

- To make a 1-level trump contract, you need 21+ points and at least 8 trumps
- To make a 4-level trump contract, you need 25+ points and at least 8 trumps
- To make a 5-level trump contract, you need 27+ points and at least 8 trumps

You will **usually** have unbalanced hands; with balanced hands, you usually choose a No Trump contract.

All the hands today are unbalanced hands, best played in a trump contract. Add up the number of cards you've got in each suit to choose your suit: play in your **longest** suit. Add up your points to decide if you're strong enough for a game or only strong enough for a part score. **But see below...**

Why choose a Game contract?

Making 10 or 11 tricks is harder than making 7 - no surprise! So why bid a game rather than a part score? A part score like 1C gets a measly 50 point bonus but a game like 5C gets a decent 300 point bonus, so choose ("bid") and make a game if you want those bonus points. Of course choosing a game that doesn't make scores MINUS points, it's a risk; making a less ambitious part score does at least give you a positive score!

Do I need 25+ points for a Game contract?

USUALLY. If you've got two fairly balanced hands and just 8 trumps, split 4:4, you need 25+ for a major game (10 tricks) or 27+ for a minor game (11 tricks) because the contract will play more-or-less like a NT contract; your trumps won't earn many extra tricks.

BUT if you've got singletons and voids - shapely hands - your trumps work harder and you can make game with as little as 22 or 23 points, by ruffing. Today you can see both hands before you choose your contract, so you can make a well-informed choice. (See Shortage Points, next.)

Shortage Points

One way to factor in your hand's shape is to give your short hand extra points called **Shortage Points**:

- Add 3 points for a void
- Add 2 points for a singleton
- Add 1 point for a doubleton

So if you have 22 High Card Points, but dummy has a void, that's 22+3 points: just enough for game in Hearts or Spades. **However** you need a trump fit (at least 8 trumps) and the short hand needs 3+ trumps to earn Shortage Points. The long hand never earns Shortage Points.

Counting trumps as top tricks

You can count trumps as top tricks even when you're missing an honour or two, as you KNOW they will make tricks. You can't have problems with entries, unlike NT. For example:

- In a No Trump contract, if you lead from KQJTxx + xx it may make five tricks or just ONE trick if your opponent holds onto their Ace for one round and you don't have any entries to this hand.
- In a Trump contract, if you lead from your trump suit of KQJTxx + xx it will always make five tricks whenever your opponent plays their Ace.

So, when counting top tricks, add the tricks your trump suit will make by leading them (drawing trumps) - usually from the long hand. You can count on it!

Should I choose No Trumps or Trumps?

With some hands you can choose a No Trumps contract or a Trump contract, but Trump contracts:

- Are usually safer, because if your opponents set up a long suit, you can ruff it!
- Usually score better, because with 8+ trumps (a trump fit) you can earn extra tricks by ruffing

But don't worry about that today; choose trump contracts please!

Should I count Winners or losers?

In a No Trump contract, you can usually count your winners and decide whether to bid a part score or game. If you're fairly certain you have 9 winners, you should bid 3NT.

In a Trump contract, you can count your winners, but it's sometimes easier to count your losers instead. If you're fairly certain you only have 3 losers, you should bid 4H, for example.

You'll see examples of both situations in the example hands.

So what is an unbalanced hand?

An unbalanced hand:

- Has a void or a singleton OR
- Two doubletons

Unbalanced hands are less suitable for a No Trump contract and more suitable for a Trump contract; balanced hands are less suitable for a Trump contract and more suitable for a No Trump contract, but these are guides, not rules.

Playing in a Trump Contract

Card play

Extra tricks

Last week you learned that in a No Trump contract, if you need extra tricks, you can:

- **Promote** high cards - by forcing out the higher cards
- **Establish** low cards in a long suit - by leading the suit several times
- **Finesse** - by leading towards high cards with a gap and getting lucky

You can use the same techniques in a Trump contract, but there's one more. You can:

- **Ruff** (or trump) - play trumps on a suit that you have a shortage in

Ruff from the short hand!

Ruffing gets you extra tricks but **ONLY** if using trumps from the **short hand**, the hand with fewer trumps; usually dummy. The trumps in the long hand will make tricks when you lead them to draw trumps; that's their main job. If the trumps in the short hand are "spare", not needed to draw trumps, use them to ruff losers for extra tricks.

Ruffing from the long hand does not earn extra tricks. But there are exceptions - including cross-ruffing.

Drawing trumps

When you plan your Trump contract, a key decision is **when to draw trumps**. As a general rule:

- If you have lots of trumps and lots of winners in the other suits, **draw trumps as soon as possible**. You do not want your opponents to ruff YOUR winners.
- If you are short of trumps or need them for ruffing or entries to Dummy, you may need to delay drawing trumps - or not draw trumps at all.

The Practice Hands

You can use the same techniques to play in a Trump contract as in a No Trump contract, but there are additional techniques - and worries - because you've got trumps and so have your opponents. So this week includes some familiar techniques and some new ones.

Just like last week, the hands are grouped so Declarer can practice these different techniques:

- Hands 1-4: Cashing Top Tricks
- Hands 5-8: Ruffing
- Hands 9-12: Cross-ruffing
- Hands 13-16: Promoting High Cards
- Hands 17-32: Trickier Contracts (including finessing and establishing)

Drawing trumps and cashing top tricks (Hands 1-4)

In a trump contract you should ALWAYS draw trumps as soon as you can, to stop your opponents trumping your winners. UNLESS you have a good reason not to! We'll get to those reasons a bit later.

If you can draw trumps and have enough top tricks - tricks that you can win right away - to make your contract, go ahead and do that! Don't worry about making extra tricks, make your contract.

The first four hands demonstrate this.

North East South West

15 8 6 11

♠ 432
♥ AK5
♦ A9
♣ A8764

♠ A86
♥ T643
♦ KJ7
♣ QJT

♠ 975
♥ QJ8
♦ 652
♣ K953

Board: 1 Dealer: North Lead: ♠K #M44

North has 21 points and nine clubs, so should choose 1C: 7 tricks in clubs

East leads ♠K (probably top of a sequence, KQJ, or maybe KQ).

You can't take the lead yet. You have 6 top winners (0♠, 3♥, 1♦ and 2♣) but with nine clubs you should have at least one more club winner once you have drawn the defenders' trumps - probably more.

Your opponents win three rounds of spades. Whatever they lead next you will win the trick. **Draw trumps** to prevent nasty surprises! Lead the Ace, then the King. Lead a third club to West's Queen.

You'll make 0♠, 3♥, 1♦ and 4♣ - 8 tricks.

After 2 rounds of clubs, you know that West has the Queen. You don't really need to lead a third round of clubs, as the Queen will only make once and it uses up two of YOUR trumps - so sometimes in this situation you would ignore the remaining trump and play the other suits. Not much advantage to that here, though.

East South West North

14 7 7 12

♠ A7
♥ 32
♦ AK642
♣ J943

♠ K864
♥ K76
♦ J53
♣ 765

♠ 532
♥ QJT9
♦ QT9
♣ QT8

Board: 2 Dealer: East Lead: ♥Q #M45

East has 21 points and eight spades, so should choose 1S: 7 tricks in spades.

South leads ♥Q (probably top of a sequence, QJT, or maybe QJ). You can take the lead immediately with your Ace or King. You have 4 top winners (0♠, 2♥, 0♦, 2♣) but three trump winners once the ♠A has been driven out.

Draw 3 rounds of trumps, expecting the suit to break 3:2. This will leave one trump in your hand and one trump in dummy. Ruff a diamond for an eighth trick.

If trumps split badly, you won't make an overtrick but I wouldn't worry about that!

To make an overtrick even if trumps split badly (4:1 or 5:0), win the first trick in dummy with the King of hearts, then play a heart to ♥A. Cash ♣AK and lead a heart, which loses. Later, play the fourth heart from your hand and ruff it from dummy with ♠8 (the only trump that's higher than the eight is the Ace). You've made your overtrick. Or you could ruff your third diamond in hand. The point is, you can make an overtrick trick by using one of the four spades in your hand or in dummy to ruff a loser, rather than leading them.

South West North East

13	13	10	4
	♠ JT94		
	♥ 6432		
	♦ A5		
	♣ KQ8		
♠ 62		♠ 3	
♥ AKQ97		♥ J5	
♦ KJ83		♦ QT962	
♣ 42		♣ JT753	
	♠ AKQ875		
	♥ T8		
	♦ 74		
	♣ A96		

Board: 3 Dealer: South Lead: ♥A #M41

South has ten spades and 23 points, so could choose 1S, but with 10 top tricks should choose 4S, for the game bonus: 10 tricks in spades.

West leads ♥A (probably top of a sequence, AK).

We have 10 top winners (6♠, 0♥, 1♦, 3♣).

Assuming the defence plays ♥AKQ, we win the third trick by ruffing in hand.

Draw trumps to prevent nasty surprises, then cash the rest of your winners. Simple.

West North East South

19	5	9	7
	♠ JT765		
	♥ 9		
	♦ 854		
	♣ KJ87		
♠ AK92		♠ 843	
♥ A8642		♥ KQJ3	
♦ A9		♦ K73	
♣ A4		♣ 952	
	♠ Q		
	♥ T75		
	♦ QJT62		
	♣ QT63		

Board: 4 Dealer: West Lead: ♠6 #M42

West has 28 points and nine hearts so should choose 4H, for the game bonus: 10 tricks in hearts.

North will probably lead a low spade (which suggests they have a spade honour) - safer than leading away from ♣KJ.

We have 10 top winners (2♠, 5♥, 2♦, 1♣).

We can take the first trick with our Ace or King. **Draw trumps** to prevent nasty surprises, then play our remaining top winners to make your contract. Then you can ruff the fourth spade in dummy for an extra trick.

Ruffing for extra tricks (Hands 5-8)

If you don't have enough top tricks to make your contract, you have to be a bit more creative. In a trump contract, a common method is to **ruff** (trump) your losers but... **yes, I'm going to say this again:**

Ruffing only gives you extra tricks if you use trumps **from the short hand**, the hand with fewer trumps - usually dummy. The trumps in the long hand are used to draw trumps - that's their main job - and any that are left over after that are winners anyway. So if the trumps in the short hand are not needed to draw trumps, you can use them to ruff losers in the long hand, to get extra tricks.

There are exceptions. Sometimes you need to ruff from the long hand to help establish a long suit, or to gain an entry (including cross-ruffing), or you might have such a puny trump suit that the only way it can make tricks is by ruffing. But most of the time, don't bother ruffing from the long hand.

You usually still need to draw trumps, but if you're relying on ruffing from the short hand, you may have to delay drawing trumps until you've done that. Tricky.

The next four hands demonstrate ruffing to make extra tricks.

North East South West

13 8 12 7

♠ A84

♥ KQ964

♦ A86

♣ 72

♠ Q96

♥ 3

♦ J954

♣ KJ965

♠ KJ2

♥ T85

♦ QT73

♣ QT4

♠ T753

♥ AJ72

♦ K2

♣ A83

Board: 5 Dealer: North Lead: ♥5 #M46

North has 25 points and nine hearts, so should choose 4H for the game bonus: 10 tricks in hearts.

East will probably lead a trump because they don't want to lead away from any of their honours; leading a trump is often the safest lead.

You will take the lead immediately, with the 6 or 7! That lead backfired a bit.

You can see 9 top winners (1♠, 5♥, 2♦, 1♣), you need one extra trick.

That extra trick will come from ruffing a losing diamond in dummy, the short hand (remember!). You only need one trump for that, so can afford to draw two more rounds of trumps, to reduce the risk of nasty surprises.

If West followed to the first round of trumps (they did), you know trumps are going to break OK, 2:2 or 3:1 so they are all gone by the second or third round. Play dummy's King of diamonds, then cross to the Ace and lead a low diamond for dummy to ruff. Ten tricks.

If West didn't follow to the first round of hearts they have split badly (4:0), don't panic! Draw 3 rounds of trumps - not FOUR. This leaves then with the Ten, so make sure you leave the Ace or Jack in dummy so you can overtrump their Ten, if they trump the third round of diamonds.

East South West North

16	12	7	5
	♠ 7432		
	♥ KT85		
	♦ 53		
	♣ QT7		
♠ T86		♠ AK	
♥ 3		♥ Q9642	
♦ AQJ872		♦ K964	
♣ 432		♣ A9	
	♠ QJ95		
	♥ AJ7		
	♦ T		
	♣ KJ865		

Board: 6 Dealer: East Lead: ♠Q #M47

East has 23 points and ten diamonds, so could choose 1D, but with 9 top tricks and an excellent chance of ruffing two losers in dummy, should choose 5D for the game bonus: 11 tricks in diamonds.

Or, to put it another way: you only have two losers: the 9 of clubs and the 3 of hearts, so should make 11 tricks. You ruff the other losers.

South leads ♠Q (probably top of a sequence, QJT or maybe QJ).

You take the lead immediately, with your Ace or King. You have 9 top winners (2♠, 0♥, 6♦, 1♣). You need two extra tricks - and can make them by ruffing a spade and a club in your own hand, East (because this time, dummy has more trumps, so dummy, West is the long hand).

Draw trumps to prevent nasty surprises. Lead a diamond towards dummy's AQJ and play the Ace.

If both opponents follow (they do) you can play a second round to remove the last one. Lead the Ace of clubs, then a low club (which loses). You will now lose a heart, but can now ruff a club and spade in hand - returning to dummy by ruffing hearts.

If either opponent does not follow (diamonds have split 3:0, a 22% chance) then you will need to take the two ruffs before playing the third round of trumps. If South has the 3 trumps, ruff high to make sure you're not over-ruffed.

South West North East

14	12	7	7
	♠ 9732		
	♥ AQ		
	♦ 654		
	♣ JT62		
♠ AKQT		♠ 85	
♥ T8642		♥ 9753	
♦ T		♦ QJ872	
♣ K98		♣ A4	
	♠ J64		
	♥ KJ		
	♦ AK93		
	♣ Q753		

Board: 7 Dealer: South Lead: ♠A #M48

South has 21 points and eight clubs, so should choose 1C: 7 tricks in clubs.

West leads ♠A (probably top of a sequence, AKQ or maybe AK).

You can see just 4 top winners (0♠, 2♥, 2♦, 0♣), you need 3 extra tricks.

You'll make 2 club tricks once the ♣A and ♣K have been driven out, by leading them. You can make the third extra trick by ruffing a spade in your hand, as long as clubs don't split 5:0.

Were you tempted to choose 1NT rather than 1C? Both hands are balanced, but you're short in hearts, and haven't got a good spade stop. It might well go badly wrong... 1C is safer.

West North East South

18	6	8	8
	♠ 74		
	♥ KQJT		
	♦ 865		
	♣ T642		
♠ Q6		♠ A9532	
♥ 963		♥ 5	
♦ AKQJ9		♦ T74	
♣ AQ9		♣ KJ53	
	♠ KJT8		
	♥ A8742		
	♦ 32		
	♣ 87		

Board: 8 Dealer: West Lead: ♦5 #M58

West has 26 points and eight diamonds, so could choose 1D, but with 10 top tricks and a good chance of ruffing a heart or two in dummy, they should choose 5D for the game bonus: 11 tricks in diamonds.

North might lead the 7 of spades, hoping partner can give them a ruff, or the King of hearts to promote their QJT. But let's assume they lead ♦5 hoping to reduce your ability to ruff in dummy. Darn.

You can see 10 top winners (1♠, 0♥, 5♦, 4♣). You can make one more trick by ruffing a heart in dummy, the short hand.

DO NOT DRAW TRUMPS. Win the lead in hand and play ♥3 towards dummy. Assuming your opponents return another trump (their best strategy), win it in hand and lead a heart for dummy to ruff with their last trump. Bingo!

Return to hand with a club and draw the remaining trumps before cashing your top winners. You lose the last trick, but still make your contract.

If North made the more obvious opening lead of the King of hearts, you could ruff hearts twice, for 12 tricks.

Cross-ruffing for extra tricks (Hands 9-12)

If you don't have enough top tricks to make your contract, you have to be a bit more creative. In a trump contract, a common method is to **ruff** (trump) your losers from the short hand, but if you need to do that several times, getting back to the long hand to lead your suit again so you can ruff it again can be tricky. You may not have enough entries!

So, welcome to the cross-ruff. If you have a shortage (singleton or void) in both hands, you can ruff one suit in dummy, then ruff the other suit in your hand... and repeat! In an ideal situation, cross-ruffing can transform a 4:4 fit in trumps into 8 tricks! For example: with spades as trumps and an opening lead of the King of diamonds:

♠ AKT3	♠ QJ82
♥ J952	♥ T743
♦ A863	♦ 8
♣ 9	♣ A8762

Draw trumps as usual and you'll be lucky to make 6 tricks. Don't draw trumps, **cross-ruff** and you'll make TEN:

1. Win the first trick with the Ace of diamonds
2. Lead a low diamond and ruff it with East's 2 of spades
3. Lead the Ace of clubs
4. Lead a low club and ruff it with West's 3 of spades
5. Now keep leading diamonds and clubs, ruffing them each time; you make the Ace of diamonds, Ace of clubs, ruff 4 clubs, ruff 3 diamonds, and lead the Queen of spades for your tenth trick.

The opposition can do nothing about this, because by the time they could potentially over-ruff your trumps, you are playing trumps that are all higher than theirs.

OK, that's a bit of a fairy story, but it does happen - surprisingly often. It's more common to use cross-ruffing to solve an entries problem and make an extra trick or two - once trumps have been drawn.

One word of caution: if you're going to use repeated cross-ruffing, cash any top winners in side suit before you do, or your opponents may well discard those suits while you're ruffing, so they can ruff your winners.

The next four hands demonstrate cross-ruffing to make extra tricks.

North East South West

15 9 9 7

♠ A7542
♥ AQJT
♦ A42
♣ 3

♠ KJ96
♥ 87
♦ K96
♣ 7642

♠ QT
♥ 642
♦ QT83
♣ KQT9

♠ 83
♥ K953
♦ J75
♣ AJ85

Board: 9 Dealer: North Lead: ♣K #M67

North has 24 points and eight hearts, so could choose 1H, but with only 3 losers (1 spade and 2 diamonds), should choose 4H for the game bonus: 10 tricks in hearts.

East leads ♣K (probably top of a sequence, KQJ or maybe KQ).

Win the first trick with ♣A in dummy. Play ♠A and another spade, which loses. Whatever the defence leads, win it in hand and lead a spade towards dummy and ruff low (or beat East's trump if they play one). Lead a club and ruff it in hand. Cash the Ace of diamonds. Lead another low spade towards dummy and ruff low (or beat East's trump if they play one). Lead a club and ruff it in hand. Lead another low spade towards dummy and ruff it with the King.

You end up making 11 tricks by cross-ruffing, losing two diamonds. Or 12 tricks if East doesn't trump, as you can ruff 4 rounds of spades, safely!

Other ways

There are other ways to play this hand, but the cross-ruff delivers an extra trick!

East South West North

15	10	12	3
		♠ T9742	
		♥ 8	
		♦ QJ74	
		♣ 954	
♠ A863			♠ 5
♥ KJT5			♥ AQ96
♦ A865			♦ K32
♣ 3			♣ AQ872
		♠ KQJ	
		♥ 7432	
		♦ T9	
		♣ KJT6	

Board: 10 Dealer: East Lead: ♠K #M69

East has 27 points and 8 hearts, so should choose 4H for the game bonus: 10 tricks in hearts.

South leads ♠K (probably top of a sequence, KQJ or KQ).

You can see 8 top winners (1♠, 4♥, 2♦, 1♣), so you need two more.

Instead of drawing trumps, use them to cross-ruff to make four extra tricks!

Do not draw trumps!

Before beginning your cross-ruff, cash any side winners if you can do it safely without losing the lead. (If you lose the lead, your opponents might ruin your plan by leading trumps.) Otherwise an opponent may discard your side suit while you are cross-ruffing and ruff your winners later.

Win the first trick with ♠A and cash ♦AK. Cash ♣A and lead a second club, ruffing it in dummy with ♥5. Lead a second spade and ruff it in hand with ♥6. Lead a third club and ruff it in dummy with ♥T; lead a third spade and ruff it in hand with ♥9. Lead a fourth spade from dummy and ruff it in hand with ♥Q. Lead a fourth club and ruff it in dummy with ♥K. You've made 11 tricks already, ♥A is your 12th trick.

Ruffing high

Cross-ruffing can go wrong! Typically, if an opponent over-ruffs you. You can usually ruff low on the first or second round without getting over-ruffed, but after that ruff as high as you can - a lot easier if you have all the high trumps!

Of course, if you have enough trumps to draw all the trumps first, do that and you can't be over-ruffed.

South West North East

15	7	11	7
		♠ QT95	
		♥ AJ32	
		♦ 3	
		♣ A543	
♠ 764			♠ 32
♥ K87			♥ QT965
♦ KJ987			♦ QT4
♣ 98			♣ QJT
		♠ AKJ8	
		♥ 4	
		♦ A652	
		♣ K762	

Board: 11 Dealer: South Lead: ♠4 #M70

South has 26 points and 8 spades, so should choose 4S for the game bonus: 10 tricks in spades.

West leads ♠4 (suggesting they expect you to ruff, or maybe they don't have another safer lead).

You can see 8 top winners (4♠, 1♥, 1♦, 2♣) so you need two more. Instead of drawing the remaining trumps, you can ruff losing diamonds or hearts, from either hand - as you have 7 top trumps (AKQJT98!). With shortages in both hands and a shortage of entries, the best plan is to cross-ruff, which should make three extra tricks - more than enough.

Before beginning your cross-ruff, cash your side winners if you can do it without losing the lead. (If you lose the lead, your opponents might ruin your plan by leading trumps.) Otherwise an opponent may discard your side suit while you are cross-ruffing and ruff your winners later.

So... win the spade lead (with the eight!) and cash ♣AK. Now cash ♥A and ♦A, then cross-ruff diamonds and hearts to make 11 tricks.

Cross-ruffing?

If you've forgotten how cross-ruffing works (shame on you!), look at the commentary for hand 69.

West North East South

12 12 11 5

♠ K3

♥ KJ875

♦ AJ5

♣ 543

♠ 7

♥ A963

♦ 863

♣ AKJ98

♠ AJ642

♥ Q

♦ Q9

♣ QT762

♠ QT985

♥ T42

♦ KT742

♣

Board: 12 Dealer: West Lead: ♣3 #M71

West has 23 points ten clubs, so should choose 1C: 7 tricks in clubs.

North leads ♣3 (suggesting they expect you to ruff, or maybe they don't have another, safer lead).

You can see 7 top winners (1♠, 1♥, 0♦, 5♣), enough for your contract, but why stop there?

Instead of drawing the remaining trumps, you can ruff losing spades or hearts, from either hand - as you have 8 top trumps (AKQJT987!). With shortages in both hands and a shortage of entries, the best plan is to **cross-ruff**, which should make three extra tricks.

Win the trump lead, play ♥A and ruff a heart in dummy. Play ♠A and ruff a spade in hand. Ruff another heart, another spade and the last heart. Now draw trumps and lose the last three diamonds to make 10 tricks.

You know that North has 3 little trumps, ♣543, so on this occasion there's no chance of being over-ruffed (they can only beat your ♣2, but that's in the East hand so they can't beat it.)

Cross-ruffing?

If you've forgotten how this works (tsk!), look at the commentary for hand 69.

Promoting high cards for extra tricks (Hands 13-16)

You learned about **promoting** in the previous lesson - and practice session - but for No Trump contracts. Promoting works the same for Trump contracts, but it's a bit riskier: there's a chance that your promoted high cards might get trumped. Poop! This is a bigger risk when promoting lower cards (such as QJT rather than KQJ); better to draw trumps first if you can, to avoid nasty surprises.

I'll repeat most of the explanation from the previous lesson:

If you don't have enough top tricks to make your contract, you can **promote** your high cards from the "runner up" position to winners, by getting your opponent to play their higher cards - usually by force. For example: if you have KQJ but not the Ace, these aren't top tricks, but lead the King to force out the Ace, and the Queen and Jack become winners.

If your opponent refuses to play their Ace on your King (this is called **ducking**) then lead the Queen. If they duck again, you've made your two tricks and should switch to another suit; they might have AT left, and leading the Jack would give them two tricks.

If you have a sequence like KQJx in one hand, it's even better to lead a low card towards it; your opponent may play their Ace without being forced to, leaving you with THREE winners. (It's a very simple finesse.)

North East South West

16	16	7	1
		♠ KQJT	
		♥ K42	
		♦ 7	
		♣ AK754	
♠ 864			♠ A92
♥ 876			♥ QJT3
♦ JT962			♦ AKQ54
♣ 93			♣ 8
		♠ 753	
		♥ A95	
		♦ 83	
		♣ QJT62	

Board: 13 Dealer: North Lead: ♦A #M49

North has 23 points and ten clubs, so could choose 1C, but with 2 losers (a spade and a diamond) should choose 5C for the game bonus: 11 tricks in clubs.

You can throw your losing heart onto the King of spades, once you've promoted it. You know this with certainty because you can see both hands when choosing your contract - but only in MiniBridge!

East leads ♦A (probably top of a sequence, AKQ or AK, but could be a singleton Ace).

You can see 7 top winners (0♠, 2♥, 0♦, 5♣); you need 4 extra tricks.

Ruffing a diamond in hand provides one extra trick (there are 5 clubs in both hands, so either hand can be considered the short hand). You can make 3 more extra tricks in spades by driving out the ♠A to promote your KQJT. Remember to draw trumps first to avoid nasty surprises.

You'll lose the first trick to ♦A, assuming East leads ♦K next, ruff it in hand.

Draw trumps! Now lead your spades: ♠KQJ10. The defence will take a trick with ♠A, but you'll make your 5C contract courtesy of your spade promotion.

East South West North

13	11	8	8
		♠ T843	
		♥ 52	
		♦ A972	
		♣ KJ9	
♠ J96			♠ 752
♥ AQ93			♥ KJ84
♦ JT63			♦ KQ5
♣ 86			♣ A52
		♠ AKQ	
		♥ T76	
		♦ 84	
		♣ QT743	

Board: 14 Dealer: East Lead: ♠A #M50

East has 21 points and eight hearts so should choose 1H: 7 tricks in hearts.

South leads ♠A (probably top of a sequence, AKQ or maybe AK, but could be a singleton Ace).

You can see 5 top winners (0♠, 4♥, 0♦, 1♣), so you need two extra tricks.

You can make 3 more extra tricks in diamonds by driving out the ♦A to **promote** your ♦KQJT. Remember to draw trumps first to avoid nasty surprises.

You can make another extra trick by ruffing a club in dummy (with the same number of hearts in both hands, either can be considered the short hand). So...

South will probably take the first 3 tricks with ♠AKQ. Whatever they lead next, win the trick.

Draw three rounds of trumps to reduce the risk of nasty surprises. Assuming they split 3:2 (they do), you'll have one trump left in each hand. Lead ♦K to drive out the ♦A; if they duck, just keep going with the Q, J and T until you make 3 diamond tricks and the contract.

South West North East

16 7 7 10

♠ KQ84

♥

♦ QT8752

♣ 532

♠ A952

♥ QT873

♦ 4

♣ JT6

♠ 763

♥ KJ92

♦ A63

♣ Q74

♠ JT

♥ A654

♦ KJ9

♣ AK98

Board: 15 Dealer: South Lead: ♣J #M51

South has 23 points and nine diamonds, so could choose 1D, but with only two losers (a spade and a diamond) should choose 5D for the game bonus: 11 tricks in diamonds.

West leads ♣J (probably top of a sequence, JT9 but could be an internal sequence, KJT).

You can see 3 top winners (0♠, 1♥, 0♦, 2♣) but your trump suit (KQJT987) is certain to provide five tricks. So you need 3 extra tricks.

Promote your solid spade suit (KQJT) for 3 extra tricks once ♠A has been driven out. Remember to draw trumps first to avoid nasty surprises.

Win the opening lead with your Ace in hand. Start drawing trumps immediately, until the defence takes their ♦A. Whatever the defence leads next, win it and draw any outstanding trumps. Play spades until ♠A is driven out to promote three spade tricks and make your contract.

The kindness of strangers

You are CERTAIN that you should make 5D because you have 8 top tricks (including 5 trump tricks) and 3 spade tricks. Certain because we're still letting you see both hands when choosing your contract. It will get harder.

West North East South

15 5 11 9

♠ JT932

♥ A876

♦ 65

♣ 43

♠ 4

♥ KQT9

♦ AKQ3

♣ JT65

♠ 875

♥ J5

♦ JT97

♣ AKQ7

♠ AKQ6

♥ 432

♦ 842

♣ 982

Board: 16 Dealer: West Lead: ♠J #M74

West has 26 points and eight clubs and eight diamonds, could choose 1C or 1D. But with just two losers (1 heart and 1 spade) in either suit, they should choose 5C or 5D for the game bonus. Let's assume you chose 5D: 11 tricks in diamonds.

North leads ♠J (probably top of a sequence, JT9 or an internal sequence KJT).

You lose the first trick to North's Jack (or South's Queen), then ruff the second round of spades in hand. Now what?

You can see 9 top winners (0♠, 0♥, 4♦, 4♣ plus that spade ruff), so need two extra tricks.

Those extra tricks can come by driving out the ♥A to promote your KQJT9, **but you have to be careful**. Even if trumps break nicely, 3:2 (they do), if you play three rounds to draw all the opponents' trumps, there will be no trumps left in your hand. When the defence gets the lead with their ♥A, they can cash another spade trick, defeating your contract.

So you can only afford to draw TWO rounds of trumps initially, with ♦AK. Then drive out the ♥A, keeping a trump in hand so you can ruff the inevitable spade lead. Then you can cross over to dummy with a club and draw the last trump with ♦J.

That was a tricky one! Did you spot the booby trap?

Trickier hands (Hands 17-32)

These last 16 hands are even more awkward and not grouped by technique, so it was up to you to choose the right approach; no hints. How did you do?

North East South West

13 10 8 9

♠ JT9
 ♥ QJ9832
 ♦ 7
 ♣ KQ4
 ♠ 642
 ♥ T7654
 ♦ K3
 ♣ AJ6

Board: 17 Dealer: North Lead: ♠A #M43

North has 21 points and 9 diamonds, so should choose 1D: 7 tricks in diamonds.

East leads ♠A (top of a sequence). We have 10 top winners (0♠, 2♥, 7♦, 1♣).

We ruff the first trick and play a low diamond to ♦K and back to ♦A. When West shows out on the second round we draw the last trump with ♦Q.

Rather than just claim our ten top winners we should try for an eleventh trick in clubs. We start by playing a club towards ♣J, which would win the trick if East started with ♣KQ.

In practice West wins with ♣Q and returns a spade, which we ruff in hand. We now try our second shot in clubs by playing ♣A and another. When the suit breaks 3-3 ♣8 becomes our eleventh trick.

Note: it was important to start drawing trumps with ♦K, following the principle of playing the high card from the short side first. If we play ♦A before ♦K East will ruff if we try to get back to our hand with a heart.

East South West North

19 10 2 9

♠ 853
 ♥ A843
 ♦ 7
 ♣ AJ753
 ♠ JT62
 ♥ JT9
 ♦ 6432
 ♣ 86
 ♠ A9
 ♥ 76
 ♦ JT985
 ♣ KQT2

Board: 18 Dealer: East Lead: ♣K #M52

East has 21 points and eight spades, so should choose 1S: 7 tricks in spades.

South leads ♣K (top of sequence).

We can see 3 top winners (0♠, 0♥, 3♦, 0♣) but spades provide three more when ♠A has been driven out, and hearts also provide three more when ♥A has been driven out.

In practice we can't actually make all of these nine tricks. North wins the second round of clubs and switches to ♦7. We start drawing trumps, but South wins with ♠A and gives his partner a diamond ruff. North gets off lead with ♥A and another heart, after which we can draw the remaining trumps and claim the rest. Making eight tricks.

South West North East

13 9 9 9

♠ 76
 ♥ KQ82
 ♦ 864
 ♣ A742
 ♠ Q94
 ♥ JT9
 ♦ KQ95
 ♣ JT9
 ♠ KT3
 ♥ 65
 ♦ AT73
 ♣ Q853
 ♠ AJ852
 ♥ A743
 ♦ J2
 ♣ K6

Board: 19 Dealer: South Lead: ♦K #M54

South has 22 points and eight hearts, so should choose 1H: 7 tricks in hearts.

West leads ♦K.

We can see 6 top winners (1♠, 3♥, 0♦, 2♣). Hearts could give two more tricks if the outstanding trumps break 3-2. Extra tricks might be made by setting up the long spade suit with a ruff.

West wins the first two tricks with ♦KQ and switches to ♥J. We win in hand and lead a second round to North's ♥K. When both opponents follow suit we draw the last trump with ♥Q and try a spade to ♠J (hoping that East has ♠KQ).

West wins with ♠Q and switches to ♣J, which we win with dummy's ♣A. We play a spade to ♠A and ruff a spade in dummy. When both opponents follow suit we finish with ten tricks. Even so, it was right to settle for a partscore because game is against the odds (about a 25% chance).

There are other ways to make ten tricks, but the recommended approach allows us to make nine tricks against a 4-2 spade break. After ruffing the third round of spades in dummy we would come to hand with ♣K and give up a spade to set up our ninth trick.

West North East South

14	8	11	7
	♠ 96		
	♥ J42		
	♦ QJT8		
	♣ KJ86		
♠ KQJT8		♠ A53	
♥ A963		♥ K5	
♦ A53		♦ 742	
♣ 2		♣ AT973	
	♠ 742		
	♥ QT87		
	♦ K96		
	♣ Q54		

Board: 20 Dealer: West Lead: ♦Q #M59

West has 25 points and eight spades, so should choose 4S for the game bonus: 10 tricks in spades.

North's safest lead is ♦Q.

We can see 9 top winners (5♠, 2♥, 1♦, 1♣). The extra trick comes from a heart ruff in dummy. This must be done before drawing all the trumps.

After winning the opening lead with ♦A we play a heart to ♥K, a heart to ♥A and a third round of hearts.

The simple approach is to play safe by ruffing with ♠A. We draw trumps and later concede a heart and two diamonds to make our contract exactly.

It's slightly better to ruff the third round of hearts low. When South follows suit we play a spade to ♠K and ruff the fourth round of hearts with ♠A. We cash ♣A, ruff a club in hand and claim three more tricks with our remaining top trumps. This gives us eleven tricks.

If South had been able to overruff the third round of hearts we could still make ten tricks by ruffing the fourth round with ♠A.

North East South West

19	13	5	3
	♠ AJ7		
	♥ AKQ96		
	♦ Q7		
	♣ K63		
♠ QT5432		♠ K96	
♥ 52		♥ 874	
♦ 8		♦ AKJT9	
♣ JT85		♣ Q9	
	♠ 8		
	♥ JT3		
	♦ 65432		
	♣ A742		

Board: 21 Dealer: North Lead: ♦A #M60

North has 24 points and eight hearts, so could choose 1H, but can make extra tricks by ruffing from dummy, so should choose 4H for the game bonus: 10 tricks in hearts.

East leads ♦A.

We can see 8 top winners (1♠, 5♥, 0♦, 2♣). We can make two more tricks by ruffing spades in dummy, but if we draw trumps there won't be any hearts left to ruff the spades. So it must be done before trumps are drawn.

After ruffing the third round of diamonds we cash ♠A and ruff ♠7 with ♥10. We come back to hand with ♥A and ruff the last spade. We re-enter hand with ♣K and draw the remaining trumps. We have to lose a club at the end but still finish with ten tricks.

East South West North

17	8	8	7
	♠ T8642		
	♥ 9		
	♦ J65		
	♣ AQ53		
♠ J		♠ AKQ	
♥ 7652		♥ AQJT3	
♦ A82		♦ 743	
♣ K9876		♣ J2	
	♠ 9753		
	♥ K84		
	♦ KQT9		
	♣ T4		

Board: 22 Dealer: East Lead: ♦K #M61

East has 25 points and nine hearts, so should choose 4H for the game bonus: 10 tricks in hearts.

South leads ♦K.

We can see 5 top winners (3♠, 1♥, 1♦, 0♣). Hearts give us at least 3 more tricks even if a heart is lost. The danger is losing 2 diamonds, 2 clubs and 1 heart.

Play ♠AKQ throwing ♦82 from dummy. Ruff a diamond. Play a trump to the ace. Ruff the last diamond. Play another trump, losing to the king.

South switches to ♣T and North wins the next two tricks with ♣AQ. When North plays a third round of clubs it's important to ruff high. There's still a high trump to draw South's remaining trump and only 3 tricks are lost.

South West North East

11	10	10	9
	♠ 764		
	♥ KQ73		
	♦ K94		
	♣ Q64		
♠ KJT9		♠ 53	
♥ 865		♥ AJT92	
♦ QJT7		♦ 532	
♣ K3		♣ A98	
	♠ AQ82		
	♥ 4		
	♦ A86		
	♣ JT752		

Board: 23 Dealer: South Lead: ♦ Q #M62

South has 21 points and eight clubs, so should choose 1C: 7 tricks in clubs.

West leads ♦ Q.

We can see 3 top winners (1♠, 0♥, 2♦, 0♣). A heart can be set up, a spade finesse might win and 3 club tricks are likely.

Win the ♦ A and lead ♥ 4. The ♥ K loses to the ♥ A, but winning the next diamond in dummy, we throw the diamond loser on ♥ Q.

The simplest continuation is to draw trumps, which will result in seven tricks.

It's also reasonable to try the spade finesse at this point. In practice West wins with ♠ K and the opponents will draw the trumps to stop us ruffing a spade in dummy, after which we'll finish with the same seven tricks.

West North East South

13	4	12	11
	♠ 95		
	♥ K75		
	♦ JT9		
	♣ T9862		
♠ KT764		♠ QJ32	
♥ JT4		♥ 932	
♦ 84		♦ AKQ2	
♣ AKQ		♣ 54	
	♠ A8		
	♥ AQ86		
	♦ 7653		
	♣ J73		

Board: 24 Dealer: West Lead: ♦ J #M63

West has 25 points and nine spades, so should choose 4S for the game bonus: 10 tricks in spades.

North leads ♦ J.

We can see 6 top winners (0♠, 0♥, 3♦, 3♣). Spades will provide four more tricks once the ace has gone. The danger is that the defence may cash their three heart tricks when they get in with ♠ A.

We should discard a heart loser before playing trumps. Best is to play ♣ AKQ discarding a heart from dummy. Then knock out the ♠ A.

North East South West

18	10	10	2
	♠ AKQ		
	♥ K		
	♦ KQJ643		
	♣ 764		
♠ J973		♠ T82	
♥ JT864		♥ 9532	
♦ 2		♦ A5	
♣ 852		♣ KQJ9	
	♠ 654		
	♥ AQ7		
	♦ T987		
	♣ AT3		

Board: 25 Dealer: North Lead: ♣ K #M64

North has 28 points and 10 diamonds, so should choose 5D for the game bonus: 11 tricks in diamonds.

East leads ♣ K setting up two clubs for the defence.

We can see 7 top winners (3♠, 3♥, 0♦, 1♣) but there are 5 diamonds to come when the ace has been played. The danger is that the defence cash two clubs when they win ♦ A.

Play ♥ A dropping the ♥ K, and ♥ Q throwing a club. Now play diamonds and lose just one diamond and one club.

It was necessary to "sacrifice" one of our heart winners because there was no outside entry to dummy once ♣ A had been knocked out. Swap one of North's spade honours with dummy's ♠ 4 and twelve tricks would have been available.

East South West North

18	3	7	12
	♠ 543		
	♥ T32		
	♦ AK3		
	♣ KQT8		
♠ AT8		♠ KQJ962	
♥ J9754		♥ AK	
♦ Q86		♦ 542	
♣ 72		♣ AJ	
	♠ 7		
	♥ Q86		
	♦ JT97		
	♣ 96543		

Board: 26 Dealer: East Lead: ♦ J #M65

East has 25 points and nine spades, so should choose 4S for the game bonus: 10 tricks in spades.

South leads ♦ J.

We can see 9 top winners (6♠, 2♥, 0♦, 1♣). The extra trick will have to come from setting up the hearts.

The defence win the first three tricks in diamonds and switch to a club. Win with ♣A and cash ♥AK. Cross to dummy on a spade to ♠8. Ruff a small heart with a high trump. Cross to ♠10 (if needed you could ruff one more heart now). Draw the last trump and discard ♣J on a heart winner.

South West North East

21	9	4	6
	♠ Q9		
	♥ 863		
	♦ J9653		
	♣ JT9		
♠ T87		♠ K532	
♥ AKQ742		♥ JT5	
♦ 742		♦ QT8	
♣ 6		♣ 432	
	♠ AJ64		
	♥ 9		
	♦ AK		
	♣ AKQ875		

Board: 27 Dealer: South Lead: ♥ A #M66

South has 25 points and nine clubs, so could choose 1C, but with one or two losers (1 heart and a spade maybe), should choose 5C for the game bonus: 11 tricks in diamonds.

West leads ♥ A followed by ♥ K.

We can see 9 top winners (1♠, 0♥, 2♦, 6♣). The extra tricks can come from diamonds or spades.

If we decide to play on diamonds we should ruff the second trick with ♣A. We cash ♦AK and play a club to ♣9. We ruff the third round of diamonds with ♣K, setting up two winners in dummy when the suit breaks 3-3.

We draw the remaining trumps with dummy's ♣JT and cash the diamond winners, discarding ♠64 from hand. With 11 tricks assured it costs nothing to try the spade finesse by leading to ♠J (or running dummy's ♠Q). When East turns up with ♠K we finish with 12 tricks.

If we decide to play on spades the best approach is to enter dummy with ♣9 at trick 3. Dummy's ♠Q is covered by East's ♠K and our ♠A. We cash ♠J and ruff ♠4 in dummy. The fall of West's ♠T87 means that our ♠6 is now a winner, so we can now draw trumps and claim the rest. Again we finish with 12 tricks.

If we haven't been watching the spot cards in spades it would be a simple matter to enter hand in diamonds and ruff ♠6 in dummy. We ruff a heart in hand, draw the remaining trumps and claim the rest.

West North East South

16	9	8	7
	♠ AK952		
	♥ QT743		
	♦ 84		
	♣ 6		
♠ Q8		♠ J6	
♥ A8		♥ 62	
♦ AT		♦ K9752	
♣ KQJ5432		♣ AT87	
	♠ T743		
	♥ KJ95		
	♦ QJ63		
	♣ 9		

Board: 28 Dealer: West Lead: ♠A #M53

West has 24 points and 11 clubs, so could choose 1C, but with 10 top winners and a good chance of establishing a diamond trick, they should choose 5C for the game bonus: 11 tricks in clubs.

North leads ♠A (probably top of a sequence, AKQ or AK).

You lose the first two tricks to ♠AK.

You can see 10 top winners (0♠, 1♥, 2♦, 7♣) and can make an extra trick or two by establishing dummy's diamonds, as long as they split 3:3 or 4:2.

Draw trumps to avoid nasty surprises! (You only need one round, as clubs split 1:1.)

Play ♦A and lead a diamond to dummy's ♦K. Lead a diamond from dummy and ruff it in hand. Lead a low club to get back to dummy, lead another diamond and ruff it in hand. The last diamond is now a winner, so lead another low club to get back to dummy and cash it, discarding you losing heart to make the contract.

In this hand, ruffing the diamonds from the long hand wasn't to earn any extra tricks, it was necessary to establish your fifth diamond - setting it up as your extra trick.

North East South West

13	4	12	11
	♠ A65		
	♥ AJ3		
	♦ KJ9763		
	♣ 4		
♠ KJ72		♠ QT98	
♥ K964		♥ QT85	
♦ 52		♦ 84	
♣ KJT		♣ 986	
	♠ 43		
	♥ 72		
	♦ AQT		
	♣ AQ7532		

Board: 29 Dealer: North Lead: ♠T #M68

North has 25 points and nine diamonds, so could choose 1D but with just 2 losers (1 spade and 1 heart) should choose 5D for the game bonus: 11 tricks in diamonds.

East leads ♠10.

We can see 9 top winners (1♠, 1♥, 6♦, 1♣). Best is to set up the club suit. Do this before drawing trumps as the diamonds provide the entry to cash the clubs

We win the opening lead with ♠A, play a club to ♣A and ruff a club. We continue with a diamond to ♦10 and a third round of clubs, which we ruff with a high trump. When the suit breaks 3-3 we draw the remaining trumps ending in dummy and discard three of our losers on dummy's remaining ♣Q75. We still have one loser in the major suits but finish with 12 tricks.

If clubs had broken 4-2 we could still have ruffed the fourth round of clubs to make at least 11 tricks.

The play is more difficult on a trump lead. Rather than ruff clubs immediately, a better play is to finesse ♣Q. If it wins, a 4-2 club break will suffice to give us the contract. If it loses, we can still fall back on a 3-3 club break.

East South West North

15	9	8	8
	♠ K954		
	♥ 987		
	♦ 753		
	♣ KQT		
♠ 7		♠ AJ832	
♥ A6532		♥ 4	
♦ T98		♦ AKQJ	
♣ A987		♣ 432	
	♠ QT6		
	♥ KQJT		
	♦ 642		
	♣ J65		

Board: 30 Dealer: East Lead: ♥K #M72

East has 23 points and seven diamonds, so should choose 1D: 7 tricks in diamonds.

You have 7 top winners and can ruff 3 losing spades from dummy, making 3 extra tricks, but that's 10 tricks, NOT 11.

South leads ♥K.

We can see 7 top winners (1♠, 1♥, 4♦, 1♣) but taking ruffs in dummy can make extra tricks.

Win ♥A. Play a spade to ♠A and ruff a spade. Cash ♣A and ruff a heart, ruff a spade, ruff a heart and ruff a spade with dummy's last trump.

That comes to 10 tricks!

South West North East

18	6	7	9
	♠ K86		
	♥ T86		
	♦ KJ872		
	♣ 54		
♠ T4		♠ Q52	
♥ KJ743		♥ A9	
♦ 65		♦ T94	
♣ QT32		♣ K9876	
	♠ AJ973		
	♥ Q52		
	♦ AQ3		
	♣ AJ		

Board: 31 Dealer: South Lead: ♥4 #M73

South has 25 points and 8 spades, so should choose 4S for the game bonus: 10 tricks in spades.

West leads ♥4. East wins ♥A and returns ♥9. Having taken three hearts, West plays ♣2.

We can see 8 top winners (2♠, 0♥, 5♦, 1♣) but spades will provide enough tricks provided a trick is not lost to ♠Q. The finesse is the best play for no spade loser.

Play ♠3 to ♠K and ♠6 to ♠J (if East plays low). Draw the last trump and cash the diamonds.

West North East South

15	11	12	2
	♠ 8		
	♥ QJ9742		
	♦ AKJT52		
	♣		
♠ 42		♠ AKJ63	
♥ AK6		♥ 8	
♦ Q4		♦ 8763	
♣ KQJT98		♣ A53	
	♠ QT975		
	♥ T53		
	♦ 9		
	♣ 7642		

Board: 32 Dealer: West Lead: ♦A #M57

West has 27 points and 9 clubs, so should choose 5C for the game bonus: 11 tricks in clubs.

North leads ♦A (probably top of a sequence, AKQ or AK, but might be a singleton).

You can see 10 top winners (2♠, 2♥, 0♦, 6♣), so you need one extra trick. You can make an extra trick by ruffing a heart in dummy (the short hand).

You'll lose the first two trick to North's ♦A and ♦K. Assuming North leads ♦J next (not a great lead, they know West hasn't got any left), ruff it in hand. Notice that South has discarded 2 hearts on these diamonds.

The best play now is to draw trumps, hoping for a 2:2 split. Lead ♣K from hand (not the ♣A from dummy; keep your options open) and you see that North has none, so South has four little ones: with ♣7642. Tricky.

You still need to ruff a losing heart. Lead ♥A (hoping that South still has one!). When South follows suit (phew), lead ♥6 towards dummy and ruff with ♣A, just in case South has no more hearts! (If you ruff with ♣5, South will over-ruff with their ♣6, defeating your contract.)

Now you can lead the remaining club from dummy towards hand, draw trumps, and cash the ♥K to make the contract.

Problems, eh?

This was a tricky hand! How did you do? Did you spot the problem in time?