

DISCOVERY

EXPERT TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR CLUB BRIDGE SCORES

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DISCOVERY

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Welcome to the sixth issue of *Discovery* - a publication designed to provide tips and tricks that will help progressing players improve their club bridge scores quickly. We have great bidding and play articles, with our defence section concentrating on ways to get the most from partner by asking for help and avoiding giving them a difficult choice.

One thing an online-only magazine allows us to do is have interactive hands which you can play. If you, like me, find it quite difficult to follow a hand from a diagram, you can click on the deal, where shown, and play the hand yourself, or see how our expert played it. These deals are found in the articles on Declarer Play from page 26. You will need to be online.

Lou Hobhouse, Editor

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W	N	E	S
	1♥	Pass	2NT

This is my least favourite bid – a response of 2NT after partner's 1X opening to show 10-12 points and a balanced hand. It removes vital bidding space; it forces opener to rebid at the three level – or make an uncomfortable pass; it wrong-sides who declares no trumps. There is *always* a better bid, usually a simple response of your own 4+ card suit. With no good natural usage, it frees up 2NT to be the Jacoby response (opposite a 1♥/♠ opening it shows 4+ card support and game+ values) – one of my top five conventions.

If you don't play Jacoby I would still encourage you to keep the 2NT response free for when you choose to make it part of your armoury.

But everything changes if there is an intervening bid. The options are more limited as your natural response may have been removed. 2NT now shows 10-12 pts with stoppers in the opposition suit. But,

prioritise major support, a negative double or a suit response if available.

W	N	E	S
	1♥	2♦	2NT ¹

¹ 10-12 points and a diamond stopper. Denies four hearts (bid 3♥) and four spades (double)

So what is the best use of an initial 2NT response after RHO doubles for take-out? Using 2NT as Jacoby makes little sense since, with opening+ points to your right, a slam is unlikely for your side.

W	N	E	S
	1♥	Dble	2NT?

The auction is more likely to be competitive and end in a partscore, so your primary aim is to keep the opposition out. Before looking at the 2NT response, it is important to understand direct raises after an intervening take-out double:

IF YOU HAVE A FIT, THEY HAVE A FIT

When you have a fit for partner's opening suit, then the odds are your opponents have a fit too. East's take-out double forces West to bid if you pass. If you pass or bid cheaply, then they'll find their fit. So everyone should play a direct raise of partner's suit (1♥-2♥, 1♥-3♥, 1♥-4♥) as pre-emptive bids – you would either have passed or only have raised to the two level without the double. How do you differentiate between the three raises?

♠	5 4
♥	9 7 4 3
♦	Q 9 7 3 2
♣	4 3

1♥-Dble-2♥ – 0-5 pts, 4+card support or up to 9 pts with 3-card support.

♠	K 6 5
♥	Q 10 3 2
♦	J 10 4 3
♣	9 6

1♥-Dble-3♥ – 5-8 pts, 4-card support

♠	8
♥	K 10 9 5 2
♦	J 6
♣	Q 9 6 5 3

1♥-Dble-4♥ – Up to 8 pts, 5+card support, good shape.

Continued overleaf

Note that there is no *natural* way to differentiate between the minimum raise being 4-card support, 0+ pts and 3-card support, 6-9 pts. If opener is strong enough to enquire about game after 2-level support, then a trial bid is the best onward move.

2NT – A GOOD RAISE TO THE 3-LEVEL+

Given that natural raises are pre-emptive, use the 2NT response to show a good raise to the three level, or higher, 4+ card support and 10+ pts (or equivalent in shape, no maximum). The kind of hand where you would have bid 3♥ without the double. This must be alerted. The conventional response is invitational to game rather than slam. The definitive name of the convention (Truscott 2NT or Jordan 2NT) is unclear, attributed to Alan Truscott and/or Robert Jordan, US-based star players, but it is considered part of Acol.

Opposite this 2NT response, opener should treat it as a standard 1♥-3♥ raise (without the intervening double): with a minimum hand, opener rebids the trump

suit at the three level as a sign-off. Responder can bid on with better than minimum. If opener is better than minimum, they can bid straight to game, or introduce a new suit as a natural trial bid. Let's look at examples of North's hand:

A	B	C
♠ A J 8 4 3	♠ K Q 10 3 2	♠ A K 10 9 2
♥ K 2	♥ 10	♥ K 6 3
♦ Q 9	♦ K 10 8 7 4	♦ J 6
♣ Q J 6 4	♣ A 9	♣ A Q 6

W	N	E	S
	1♠	Dble	2NT ^A
Pass	?		
^A 10+ points, 4+ spades			

Hand A should sign off in 3♠. A minimum hand with poor shape.

Hand B has only five losers so it should either bid 4♠, or make a trial bid of 3♦ (asking for help in diamonds). South bids 3♠ without help (then North bids 4♠) or South bids 4♠ with diamond help – whereupon you might cautiously look for a slam.

Hand C should go straight to 4♠.

REDOUBLE OF A TAKE-OUT DOUBLE

W	N	E	S
	1♠	Dble	Redble ¹
¹ 10+ pts, no support for partner's suit			

Without support for opener's suit, responder – after a take-out double – can respond with a new suit or 1NT where the usual rules apply, but should also add **redouble** to the armoury. The redouble of a take-out double denies support but promises the balance of points, showing 10+ points opposite an opening hand. It can give the opening side the option of punishing the overcalling side – particularly when doubler's partner is very weak – by doubling their low-level contract for penalty. NB This redouble does not let doubler's partner off the hook.

Overleaf we look at a hand where E/W were punished for intervening and N/S gained the upper hand.

Continued overleaf

In this deal, North's redouble shows 10+ points but no biddable support. East has to bid with a natural 2♥. South passes and North doubles for penalties. 2♥ doubled is likely to go four down for -1100. □

E/W Game. Dealer South

♠ 9 7		
♥ A Q 10 8		
♦ K 5 3		
♣ Q 10 9 4		
♠ 8 3		♠ K J 5 4
♥ K J 7 5		♥ 6 4 3 2
♦ A Q 8 2		♦ 6 4
♣ K J 8		♣ 7 6 5
		
♠ A Q 10 6 2		
♥ 9		
♦ J 10 9 7		
♣ A 3 2		

W	N	E	S
			1♠
Dble	Redble ¹	2♥	Pass
Pass	Dble ²	All Pass	

¹ 10+ points, no biddable spade support
² Penalty

Q1 What is South's first response, at game all?

W	N	E	S
	1♠	Pass	?

A	B	C
♠ Q 10 3 ♥ A J 9 5 ♦ 7 5 4 3 ♣ K 4	♠ 5 4 3 ♥ K Q 8 6 ♦ K Q 2 ♣ J 5 4	♠ A 5 4 3 ♥ K Q J 4 ♦ A Q 3 ♣ 7 6

Q2 What is South's first response, at love all?

W	N	E	S
	1♥	Dble	?

A	B	C
♠ 4 3 ♥ 10 9 6 5 4 ♦ 7 6 2 ♣ Q 8 2	♠ 3 ♥ K J 9 5 4 3 ♦ 9 4 ♣ J 10 4 3	♠ A J 4 ♥ A J 10 4 ♦ J 4 ♣ 9 8 5 2
D	E	F
♠ A Q 4 3 ♥ 9 ♦ K J 3 2 ♣ J 10 8 2	♠ 3 ♥ Q 3 ♦ K J 10 9 8 4 3 ♣ 9 5 4	♠ 9 4 ♥ Q 4 3 ♦ K 9 4 ♣ K Q 8 5 2

Q3 What is South's rebid, with E/W vulnerable?

W	N	E	S
			1♥
Dble	2NT	Pass	?

A	B	C
♠ K J 7 6 ♥ A Q J 7 4 ♦ Q 4 ♣ 9 5	♠ A 8 4 ♥ A J 10 9 6 4 ♦ 8 ♣ K Q 7	♠ A 5 ♥ K Q 7 6 5 ♦ Q 8 6 5 4 ♣ 6

Answers Overleaf



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Q1 What is South's first response, at game all?

W	N	E	S
	1♠	Pass	?

A

♠ Q 10 3
♥ A J 9 5
♦ 7 5 4 3
♣ K 4

B

♠ 5 4 3
♥ K Q 8 6
♦ K Q 2
♣ J 5 4

C

♠ A 5 4 3
♥ K Q J 4
♦ A Q 3
♣ 7 6

Hand 1A 2♦. You're waiting for partner's rebid to find out whether they have just four or 5+ spades. You are likely to end in spades but if it ends in no trumps, you may have put them off leading a diamond. Quality is never a factor with your first response.

Hand 1B 2♣. Responding 2♥ would show 5+ cards in hearts. You're not ready to support spades yet: 2♠ would undersell your points; 3♠ promises 4+ card support. Reserve 2NT for Jacoby. 2♣ is a white lie, a waiting bid – waiting to find out whether partner has five or more spades. It is always safe to make a white lie in a minor – partners are not inclined to jump to 5♣/♦ however strong they

are, and if they support you can always return to the major at the same level.

Hand 1C 2NT (Jacoby). You're too strong to raise to 4♠ and 4NT is premature. Add Jacoby 2NT to your armoury, showing 4+-card spade support and game+ values – asking for the strength of opener's hand.

Q2 What is South's first response, at love all?

W	N	E	S
	1♥	Dble	?

A

♠ 4 3
♥ 10 9 6 5 4
♦ 7 6 2
♣ Q 8 2

B

♠ 3
♥ K J 9 5 4 3
♦ 9
♣ J 10 4 3

C

♠ A J 4
♥ A J 10 4
♦ J 4
♣ 9 8 5 2

D

♠ A Q 4 3
♥ 9
♦ K J 3 2
♣ J 10 8 2

E

♠ 3
♥ Q 3
♦ K J 10 9 8 4 3
♣ 9 5 4

F

♠ 9 4
♥ Q 4 3
♦ K 9 4
♣ K Q 8 5 2

Hand 2A 2♥. This is pre-emptive, 0-5 pts. By bidding you hope to put West off bidding. It may also give your partner the chance to compete/barrage or even bid game with a powerhouse.

Hand 2B 4♥. This is pre-emptive again, with 5+ card support and up to 8 points – aiming to barrage the opponents out. The bigger your fit, the bigger their fit.

Hand 2C 2NT showing a good raise to the three level or higher (don't forget to alert this), 10+ points or eight losing tricks. Partner will rebid 3♥ with a minimum; with better than minimum they will make a trial bid or bid to game plus.

Hand 2D Redouble to show 10+ points, no heart support and a willingness to make a penalty double in E/W's final contract. West should still respond to the double. Thereafter, decide whether to bid on, or to exact a penalty. Opener should not rush to rebid.

Hand 2E 3♦. Non-forcing, a weak jump shift – by agreement – to pre-empt your opponents out of the bidding. There is no point using a strong jump shift after a take-out double, as such a hand (16+ points) is very unlikely.

Hand 2F 2♣. You have too many hearts – a likely fit with partner – to redouble. Respond normally, as you would have done without the double.

Continued overleaf

Q3 What is South's rebid, with E/W vulnerable?

W	N	E	S
Dble	2NT ^A	Pass	1♥

A	B	C
♠ K J 7 6 ♥ A Q J 7 4 ♦ Q 4 ♣ 9 5	♠ A 8 4 ♥ A J 10 9 6 4 ♦ 8 ♣ K Q 7	♠ A 5 ♥ K Q 7 6 5 ♦ Q 8 6 5 4 ♣ 6

After the double North's 2NT shows a traditional 3♥ response or better (alerted). It promises 4+card heart support and 10+ points, or eight or fewer losing tricks.

Hand 3A 3♥. A minimum hand that has got worse, with doubler's points to your left. Sign off in 3♥. Partner can still raise with game values.

Hand 3B 4♥. With six losing tricks and a 10-card fit, game is on opposite partner's good raise to the three level.

Hand 3C 3♦. A trial bid and forcing! You have great shape, but if game is to succeed you will need help in diamonds. Partner should bid 4♥ with zero or one loser in diamonds, or two losers but a maximum hand. With three or more losers partner bows out with 3♥. □

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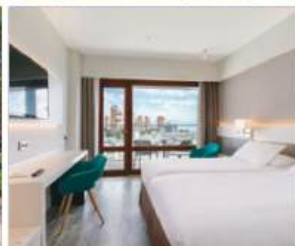
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Pre-empting to the limit first time means that you should bid directly to the level that you are prepared to risk at your first go. The idea is to create the maximum pressure on the opponents' bidding by depriving them of space to investigate, and hoping that they will therefore be unable to judge the final contract correctly. A classic example is the 3-level opening bid. Take this hand, for example:

♠	8 3
♥	K Q J 7 5 4 3
♦	8 5 3
♣	5

This hand is ideal for a 3♥ opening bid, whatever the vulnerability. What makes it so suitable?

There are a couple of factors which will make your hand more or less suitable for pre-empting.

- ♣ Vulnerability is key since it determines how many down your side is able to go while still showing a profit over what the opponents can make.
- ♣ Points in your long suit indicate a good hand for pre-empting, points in your short suits are good defensive values. The more defence you have, the less suitable you are for pre-empting since the opponents may not be able to make their contract. On the hand above you probably have no defence at all, unless the second round of hearts is cashing.

The same rules apply when you have a **big fit** for your partner's opening bid and few values.

Fit is important and *bidding to the level of the fit* is a good indicator of how high you should pre-empt. Take the number of trumps you have between your two hands and subtract six. This will tell you the level to which you should be bidding. If your partner opens a weak 2♠ and you have 4-card support, you should be thinking in terms of pre-empting to the four level (10 trumps between you, subtract six = four. Bid 4♠). Another way to think about it is that you should bid for the same number of tricks as you have joint trumps – 10 trumps between you, bid for 10 tricks. If you can't make it, it is often the right level of sacrifice.

Let's look at an example overleaf.

You are sitting West. What do you bid on the following hand at game all?

Hand 1

♠ 9 6 5 2
♥ J 5
♦ A Q 7
♣ Q 8 5 3

West	North	East	South
?		2♠	Pass

There are conflicting indicators. Bidding to the level of the fit will tell you to go directly to 4♠. However, your defensive values in diamonds are a worry, as is your relatively balanced hand and your poor trumps.

Now think about the vulnerability. If you were at favourable (non-vul against vul), this would be a clear-cut 4♠ bid, whereas at unfavourable (vul against non-vul) it would be foolish because of the downsides.

At equal vulnerability it is very close, but it is just worth a bid of 4♠.

Whatever you decide, the most important thing is to make your decision on the first round. If you hedge your bets with a bid of 3♠ and then bid 4♠ over the opponent's 4♥, you give them too much room to exchange information and, with an extra round of bidding available to them, they are likely to get the final decision right many more times than if you had bid 4♠ directly.

Now imagine you are sitting North with the following hand.

Hand 2 - Game All

♠ 4 3
♥ A Q 7 3
♦ K J 4 3
♣ A 10 4

West	North	East	South
		2♠	Pass
3♠	Dble	Pass	4♥
4♠	?		

Having made your take-out double, you are content to pass 4♠ and leave the final decision to your partner since you have described your hand.

However if the auction had been 2♠-Pass-4♠ to you, what action would you

have taken? You would have to chance a take-out double since the opponents could be robbing you of a making game. Here is the full deal:

♠ 9 6 5 2	♠ 4 3	♠ K Q J 10 8 7
♥ J 5	♥ A Q 7 3	♥ K 10 9
♦ A Q 7	♦ K J 4 3	♦ 6 2
♣ Q 8 5 3	♣ A 10 4	♣ 7 2

♠ A	♠ 4 3	♠ K Q J 10 8 7
♥ 8 6 4 2	♥ A Q 7 3	♥ K 10 9
♦ 10 9 8 5	♦ K J 4 3	♦ 6 2
♣ K J 9 6	♣ A 10 4	♣ 7 2

North-South can make 4♥, but with two hearts and a diamond to lose they can make no more. If you raise directly to 4♠ on the West cards, they may well get to 5♥.

However, if you raise to 3♠ and then 4♠, the opponents will surely just stop and double you, collecting 500.

In summary, you should decide how far you are prepared to pre-empt and then make that call at your first turn. ☐



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Some hands can seem like a misfit in waiting. With this in mind it is worth thinking ahead to what you may say next, when you don't find a fit. Very unbalanced hands can be challenging to bid, as can interpreting the bidding. Consider your planning on these two examples:

♠	7
♥	7 3
♦	A Q 9 6 4
♣	A K J 3 2

You should begin with a 1♦ bid and plan to bid clubs. You can bid the second suit (in this case your clubs) twice to show an extra card if partner makes a stronger rebid. If partner simply supports your diamonds (1♦-Pass-2♦), then pass.

♠	A 8 6 4 3 2
♥	A
♦	K 8 7 6 4 3
♣	—

Here you open 1♠ and, without a fit, keep bidding diamonds. Each bid of the second suit will tell partner the first suit is also longer.

QUIZ

Now try and interpret these three auctions:

1

West	East
1♠	2♦
2♥	2NT
3♥	3♠
4♣	Pass

2

West	East
1♥	1♠
2♦	2♣
3♥	4♥
Pass	

3

West	East
1♠	1♦
1♥	1♠
2♠	Pass



ANSWERS

Auction 1 ~ West has five or six spades and five hearts with about 14-15 points. They are strong enough to accept East's 3♠ invitation.

East has 10-12 points (the 2NT bid) with two spades and two hearts. With three spades they would have bid 3♠ over West's 2♥ bid.

Auction 2 ~ West has at least six hearts and four diamonds, and at most one spade. East has six or more spade, two hearts and no more than nine points.

Auction 3 ~ West is 4-4-1-4 or 4-4-0-5 with short diamonds. They have a minimum value opening as they only raised to 2♠. East has 4+ diamonds and four spades with about 6-9 points. With more they would not have passed 2♠. ☐



A common problem that plagues the ordinary club player is the question of whether they should raise their partner's last bid to game. Sometimes the partnership is in a game-seeking auction, and it's merely a question of 'am I maximum'. Other times you need to look closely at your partner's bid and work out if they are just competing, and that is what we shall decipher here.

Let's take an everyday auction that starts with a raise of partner's suit:

N	E	S	W
1♥	Pass	2♥	2♠
?			

Now the guidelines are very simple. If the opener rebids 3♥ then that is just competitive, saying that you would prefer to have hearts as trumps than defend against 2♠. It doesn't show any extra strength at all, it just shows extra shape and good playing strength.

Playing strength is one of those terms which it is hard to put your finger on exactly, but in simple terms it means a hand that will take more tricks as declarer than it will as a defender.

Digressing slightly, how would you assess these hands in terms of playing strength?

Hand 1	Hand 2
♠ J 3 ♥ A 7 5 3 2 ♦ A 9 3 2 ♣ A 2	♠ Q 2 ♥ A Q J 9 4 ♦ K 6 ♣ J 8 7 3
Hand 3	Hand 4
♠ 8 3 ♥ K Q J 9 4 3 ♦ 3 ♣ K Q 10 4	♠ K J 3 ♥ A J 4 2 ♦ Q 9 2 ♣ K J 4

Hand 1 has a little playing strength, with 5-4-2-2 shape and a long card in diamonds to develop, but there is very little undergrowth in the hand.

Defensively it has three certain tricks, and the ♠J might combine with something in partner's suit to slow the opponents down if they play in spades (for example partner might have ♠Qxx or ♠10xxx).

Hand 2 also has some playing strength but not much. Kx and Qx are very much defensive holdings. If you are defending a spade contract with ♠Qx then it may make a trick (declarer might well finesse into you) but if you are declaring then it won't, as the opponents can see what's on the table and will just cash their ace and king to drop it.

Hand 3 is by far the best hand in terms of playing strength, despite it having the fewest number of high card points. You have five winners in hearts, and two or three in clubs, so even if partner has very little for you there is still the expectation that playing in hearts will be good for your side.

Continued overleaf

Hand 4. And as if by magic, this is the worst hand in terms of playing strength. You have loads of defensive tricks, but if you are declarer you also have so many losers to get rid of and probably nowhere to put them.

Getting back to our example auction, what do bids mean?

N	E	S	W
1♥	Pass	2♥	2♠
?			

The answer is that if you rebid your own suit, then it is just competitive, promising a little bit of playing strength and extra distribution, but no extra high cards at all. (You might even have a shapely light opener, and just be trying to keep the opponents out of game).

A bid of 3♥ simply says ‘*I am competing, I don’t want you to raise me to game*’. (Of course there will be times when it is right for responder to go onto game but only if they have the golden perfecto hand which crops up one time in a hundred).

If opener wants to invite their partner to the party then they do so by showing a second suit, typically four cards in length but it can be three cards if they have nothing else to say. In standard English bidding a suit needs only to be three cards or more to be considered natural once you have found a fit.

You can also make a natural game try of 2NT, which would show 17-18, inviting game when partner is at the top of their 5-9 range.

Note that you should only compete when you have a shapely hand with at least five cards in your opened suit. Partner’s simple raise from 1♥/♠ to 2♥/♠ doesn’t promise four trumps, and while a gentle 4-3 fit is fine for the two level, the three level is far too high.

What about rebidding your suit after partner hasn’t raised. Does that change things? Compare and contrast these two auctions:

A

N	E	S	W
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
3♥			

B

N	E	S	W
1♥	Pass	1NT	2♠
3♥			

Auction A is well known to us, it shows a good 6-card suit and too many high cards to rebid 2♥, typically something around the 15½ – 18 mark. Some hands with 15 points are too weak to make the bid and some hands of 18 are too strong. Bidding 3♥ is not forcing – it *invites* responder to bid to game, either 3NT or 4♥, or to pass.

However, the second sequence is not going to be so strong, as it must cover hands that would have wanted to rebid 2♥ but are now unable to. It shows no more than a minimum opening but promises a good 6-card suit and is simply *competing*. Responder can raise to game (especially in a competitive auction) but they need a good fit and working cards, knowing their partner is just competing.

Continued overleaf

You open 1♠ and partner raises you to 2♠. What do you say when the next hand bids 3♣, with both sides vulnerable.

B

N	E	S	W
1♥	Pass	1NT	2♠
3♥			

So what should North bid with a full value hand where you were going to invite game? They must either stretch and bid 4♥, or hold back a little with 3♥, depending on how the overcall has affected their hand. A shortage in the enemy suit is always a good sign, but something like ♠Qxx is a negative.

The same is true if North rebids a new suit, it doesn't show a strong hand, but a willingness to compete, with good suits and extra playing strength.

N	E	S	W
1♠	Pass	2♠	3♣
?			

Hand 1	Hand 2
♠ A Q 10 7 4 ♥ 4 ♦ Q 10 3 2 ♣ K 4 3	♠ A Q 9 2 ♥ J 9 ♦ A J 9 6 ♣ K J 3
Hand 3	Hand 4
♠ A J 7 6 ♥ Q 4 3 ♦ A K 7 ♣ J 7 4	♠ K 10 8 4 3 ♥ K Q 9 2 ♦ A Q 2 ♣ 4

Hand 1 should bid 3♠ to compete. You don't have anywhere near enough to invite game by showing a second suit, but you must get in their way and try and buy the hand if you can.

Hand 2 should double for penalties. This hand has no reason to bid on, but you must punish the opponents for stepping into your live auction. Even if you can

make 4♠, the penalty you get will more than compensate. You have two trump tricks and two outside tricks, plus several other defensive values. Even if partner is short in clubs and a minimum you can expect to get it at least one off, often two off which will beat any partscore.

Hand 3 should pass as it doesn't have a trump trick and 3♣ is about 50:50 to make. We probably weren't going to make 2♠ so even if we do concede -110 it won't be the end of the world, the opponents might well have saved us from the ignominy of -200! You have balanced rubbish, and a poor club holding with lots of losers. If partner wants to compete to 3♠ (no doubt with 4-card support and a club shortage) then they are welcome, but for now you are done.

Hand 4 should invite game by bidding 3♥. With a minimum raise partner will return to 3♠, with a better hand they can go to game. Note that it's not unheard of for partner to raise the hearts, after all they could well have something like: ♠Qxx ♥AJxxx ♦xxxx ♣x where 4♥ is the only making game. □



In this summer's special bidding quiz, you are West playing match-pointed pairs at Game All.

Hand 1

♠ 7 6
♥ K 10 8 5 2
♦ K 8 7 6 3
♣ 4

W	N	E	S
		1♥	Dble
?			

Hand 2

♠ Q 9 6 3
♥ 4
♦ K 8 7 6 3
♣ J 5 2

W	N	E	S
		1♠	Dble
?			

Hand 3

♠ K J 6 2
♥ 6 4 2
♦ A 8 7
♣ Q J 9

W	N	E	S
		1♥	1♠
?			

Hand 4

♠ K 6 3
♥ J 9 4
♦ A Q 8 5 2
♣ 7 3

W	N	E	S
		1♦	Dble
?			

Hand 5

♠ 6 4
♥ K Q J 9 6 4
♦ A Q 3
♣ J 4

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	2♣	2♠
?			

Hand 6

♠ 6 4
♥ A 2
♦ K Q 10 3
♣ A K J 7 5

W	N	E	S
1♣	Pass	1♥	1♠
?			

Hand 7

♠ A Q 8 2
♥ 9 4 2
♦ 3
♣ K Q J 6 4

W	N	E	S
1♣	1♥	2♦	Pass
?			

Hand 8

♠ 4
♥ A Q 10 7 3
♦ A Q J 4 2
♣ K 8

W	N	E	S
1♥	2♣	Pass	3♣
?			

Answers overleaf x

Hand 1

♠ 7 6
♥ K 10 8 5 2
♦ K 8 7 6 3
♣ 4

W	N	E	S
		1♥	Dble
?			

Hand 2

♠ Q 9 6 3
♥ 4
♦ K 8 7 6 3
♣ J 5 2

W	N	E	S
		1♠	Dble
?			

Hand 3

♠ K J 6 2
♥ 6 4 2
♦ A 8 7
♣ Q J 9

W	N	E	S
		1♥	1♠
?			

4♥. This is a pre-emptive raise, the same as it would have been without the double. If you had a stronger hand, you would either bid 2NT or make a splinter bid. Perhaps 4♥ will make. If not, perhaps you are keeping the opponents out of a contract.

3♠. Without the double you would have settled for a simple raise to 2♠. In terms of just high cards, you do have only six points. With the double, you can raise to one level higher. If all you could make is 2♠, it is unlikely that the opponents would allow you to play there. Partner knows you do not have a normal limit raise because you would bid 2NT if you did.

2NT. When the opponents make a *suit* overcall, it is usual to play that a 2NT response reverts to being natural, with a spade stopper or two and inviting game. There is no great harm in playing 2NT as showing a 4-card raise (you could start with a double if you had a natural 2NT bid) but that would be a matter of agreement.

Answers continued overleaf

Hand 4

♠ K 6 3
♥ J 9 4
♦ A Q 8 5 2
♣ 7 3

W	N	E	S
		1♦	Dble
?			

Hand 5

♠ 6 4
♥ K Q J 9 6 4
♦ A Q 3
♣ J 4

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	2♣	2♠
?			

Hand 6

♠ 6 4
♥ A 2
♦ K Q 10 3
♣ A K J 7 5

W	N	E	S
1♣	Pass	1♥	1♠
?			

2NT. A jump to 2NT after an opposing double still shows a limit raise or better when the opening bid is a minor. Since it is possible you will end up in 3NT, you might look for an alternative (redouble or the other minor) if your holdings in the majors suggested being dummy in no trumps – but here you have something in each.

3♥. If 3♥ was a jump then it would be forcing because if partner has enough for a 2-level response and you have enough to jump then the partnership has game values. Here 3♥ is constructive but not forcing. You need a decent 6-card suit and not a completely minimum opening – lacking those features you could pass knowing that partner will often reopen.

2♦. On this particular auction the opposing overcall has not forced your side any higher. 2♦ is therefore a normal reverse, forcing for one round, showing not just longer clubs than diamonds but also significantly better than a minimum opening.

Answers continued overleaf

Hand 7

♠ A Q 8 2

♥ 9 4 2

♦ 3

♣ K Q J 6 4

W	N	E	S
1♣	1♥	2♦	Pass
?			

2♠. This time, although you are bidding higher than two of your original suit, you are not promising extras by showing your second suit. You are not the one raising the level. Your partner did that by responding 2♦.

Hand 8

♠ 4

♥ A Q 10 7 3

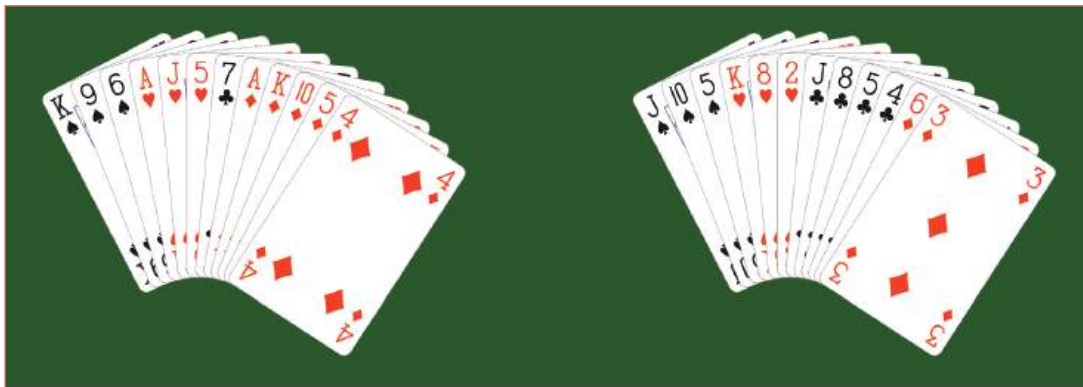
♦ A Q J 4 2

♣ K 8

W	N	E	S
1♥	2♣	Pass	3♣
?			

3♦. If 3♦ was a jump after partner had responded then it would be a very strong action, creating a game force. Here, with partner not having promised any values, it would be illogical for 3♦ to be forcing even though it is a new suit at the three level. As well as not being minimum for your opening, you are likely to have five diamonds or be short in the unbid spade suit (if, for example, you were 3·5·4·1 you would double rather than bid 3♦). ☐

1



W	N	E	S
1♦	P	1NT	P
3NT			



West and East each dropped a card.
Can you find the missing cards?



ANSWER

1 West needs 19 points to go to 3NT after East's 1NT which shows 6-9 points. You need to add the ♣A to provide the points and the shape. If you added the ♠Q West's next call would be 2♠. Add the ♦2 and West's next call would have been 3♦.

East's 1NT call shows 6-9 points and denies a 4-card major. East must therefore add the ♣Q.

Question 2 overleaf

2

W	N	E	S
2NT	P	3NT	

A♥

3♥

3♦

K♠

K♥

9♦

West and East each dropped a card.
Can you find the missing cards?

ANSWER

2 West's 2NT promises 20-22 points, and a balanced hand. The missing card must therefore be a heart. The ♥A would bring the point count to 24 and West would have opened 2♣. The missing card must be the ♥3.

East must have a few more points to see game opposite 2NT. If it was the ♠K East would have bid Stayman. East is therefore missing the ♦K.

THREE TO SIX PM BRIDGE – A FEW WORTHWHILE IDEAS TO MAKE YOUR BRIDGE PARTY A SUCCESS

The following useful tips appeared in The Tatler on 26 October 1932, authored by Elizabeth Mann, and there are quite a few suggestions you may wish to consider:

If you wish to gain a reputation for giving smart afternoon bridge parties make a point of introducing some novelty every time you give one.

The Continental hostess, for example, sometimes sends out her invitations on dainty cards emblazoned with four cards at one corner. If you can't lay your hands on any of these, and don't care about them, send invitations-as-you-please, but add that coffee will be served beforehand. For many a bridge party is spoiled by laggard guests, and the lure of coffee and liqueurs may tempt them to leave their own luncheon table a little earlier.



Daily Mirror, 3 December 1930

Have coffee ready fifteen minutes before you wish to start playing. Offer with it creme de menthe or any of the other liqueurs women usually prefer to cognac, which must be in evidence if men are of the party. Sometimes I don't offer a selection when it is an all-woman's party but simply have a bottle of creme de cacao brought in with the coffee tray. Some guests prefer to drink it in liqueur fashion with a layer of cream on top while others copy the Continental fashion of slipping a little in to their coffee.



Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 8 October 1931

See that you have both Egyptian and Turkish cigarettes to offer with a box of Virginians for the many smokers who prefer this to the most exotic brands you can provide. You can now buy coloured wax vestas in little round checked boxes which look festive to hand near the table, and if you think of purchasing any new bridge tables, choose ones with wooden slides at each corner with receptacles for copper ash trays, and copper stands for glasses or cups.

Continued overleaf



AN EXCITING EVENING AT THE NEW BRIDGE CLUB

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The Tatler, 24 May 1905

We continue with hints from *The Sphere*, dated 2 June 1928:

It is now the fashion to ask guests to remove their hats before sitting down to bridge, no matter when it is played. But the

up-to-date hostess does not feel it necessary to have them shown to a bedroom to do this. She provides for the occasion an improvised dressing-table below a mirror near the card room. There guests find a

selection of face powder to suit all skins, a pretty alabaster or painted jar filled with tiny tufts of cotton wool for applying the powder, another jar or bowl to take soiled tufts, a clothes brush, and a pin cushion, so that any necessary titivating can be done before they are announced.



Bystander, 30 November 1928

Continued overleaf

It is presumed that the guests do not care to use any but their own brushes and combs so these are not in evidence, though generally to be found in a drawer in the table by those who have forgotten their vanity case.

Make a stop about 4.30 for tea, or if you are only playing from 3 to 5pm serve tea at the end. Don't be content with the usual fare. Serve very thin slices of new bread and butter rolled up (and caught with toothpicks just until the shape is set). Always spread bread with a little chopped mustard and cress, and leave one or two leaves hanging over the edge so that they green out at the ends of the rolls. The fashionable malted brown bread makes delicious rolls of this kind.

Offer tea á la Russe, or á l'Americaine as well as tea with cream.

Have both China and Ceylon or Indian infused, and cream for those who want it. When the weather is very hot, provide iced coffee, and after tea has been served offer ice-cream or strawberries and ice cream.



Britannia and Eve, 1 October 1929

Serve a variety of dainty cakes, eclairs, and thinly-buttered walnut and raisin bread, and offer at the end tiny canapes of buttered toast spread with caviare foie gras, or cream cheese, moistened with cream, and sharpened with minced pimento and tomato catsup. Only remember to give guests tea serviettes before providing fare which will damage fingers for cards.

So are you now all set?



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Let's look at deals where declarer must avoid making reflex plays, especially ones where there is a tempting finesse. You are sitting South in the following deals:

Declarer made a mess of hand 1, below. How would you have done?

Hand 1
South plays in
3NT. West leads
the ♠J.

♠ A 6 2
♥ Q 8 4
♦ A K 7 6 4
♣ A Q

♠ K Q 5
♥ J 6 3
♦ 5 2
♣ J 10 9 5 2

W	N	E	S
	1♦	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

North opened 1♦ and raised South's 1NT response to 3NT. West led the ♠J and South didn't think too hard before settling down to the play.

Mesmerised by the sight of the ♣AQ on table, declarer won the spade in hand to lead a club to the queen. Delighted that the finesse had won, his smile soon faded when he realised that he didn't have sufficient tricks for his contract. The ♣A didn't drop the king in the West hand (no one deserves to be that lucky), so declarer had to turn his attention to diamonds. When they proved to be 4-2, South suffered the loss of two diamond tricks and simply ran out of steam. One down.

How would you have played the hand? Your **Count and Plan** would have shown you have three spades, two diamonds and four clubs, assuming you could get at them. To avoid messing up the entries, you would have taken the ♠A at trick one and played off the ♣A and the ♣Q.

Should a canny West have allowed the queen to hold, you could have returned to hand with a spade and forced out the king with a further club lead.

Here's the full deal. Nine tricks come from those counted above – three spades, two diamonds and four clubs with no need to play on diamonds.

Hand 1. 3NT by South. West leads the ♠J

♠ A 6 2
♥ Q 8 4
♦ A K 7 6 4
♣ A Q

♠ J 10 9 8 4
♥ A 9 2
♦ J 9
♣ K 7 3

♠ 7 3
♥ K 10 7 5
♦ Q 10 8 3
♣ 8 6 4

♠ K Q 5
♥ J 6 3
♦ 5 2
♣ J 10 9 5 2

Click here to
play hand
Press 'Play' to
have a go
Press 'Next' to
see Paul play it

Continued overleaf

What about the next case? How should you play 4♠? West duly leads the ♥10, won in hand with the ♥K. When the hand was played, declarer led the ♠J, forcing out East's ace of trumps, and received a diamond switch. What now?

Hand 2
South plays in 4♠.
West leads the
♥10.

♠ K Q 8 7 2
♥ A 5
♦ 7 6 5 3
♣ 6 3



♠ J 10 9 6 5
♥ K
♦ A Q
♣ K 9 8 7 4

W	N	E	S
2♥	4♠	1♥	1♠
		All Pass	

Declarer reckoned that East must hold either the ♦K or the ♣A for his opening bid, so South confidently finessed the ♦Q. A few moments later everyone was writing down 50 to E/W for one off as this was the full deal:

Hand 2. 4♠ by South. West leads the ♥10

♠ K Q 8 7 2
♥ A 5
♦ 7 6 5 3
♣ 6 3

♠ 4 3
♥ 10 9 7 4
♦ K 8 4 2
♣ A 5 2

[Click here to play hand](#)
[Press 'Play' to have a go](#)
[Press 'Next' to see Paul play it](#)

♠ A
♥ Q J 8 6 3 2
♦ J 10 9
♣ Q J 10

♠ J 10 9 6 5
♥ K
♦ A Q
♣ K 9 8 7 4

A lack of **Counting and Planning** was at fault here. The diamond finesse is a snare and a delusion. The ♦Q can be dumped on the ♥A and declarer can then play on clubs. It's irrelevant who has the ♣A as there are always ten tricks via seven trumps (four in one hand and three ruffs in the other), two hearts and the ♦A. Should East have the ♣A, you'd secure an overtrick.

Continued overleaf

Try your hand in a slam on this deal. You arrive there after a transfer sequence and Keycard Blackwood. West leads the ♣2. Now, if you win and take a successful trump finesse, you could emerge with all the tricks (five spades, two hearts, two diamonds and four clubs). Is that the right way to play the hand, though?

Hand 3
South plays in 6♣
West leads the ♣2.

♠ A J 8 7 3
♥ 10 7 6
♦ A 6
♣ Q 10 4



♠ Q 10 9 6
♥ A K 8
♦ K 9
♣ A K J 7

W	N	E	S
			2NT
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♠
Pass	6♣	All Pass	

The danger is that this club lead is a singleton (and what else could it be? The lead of a low card proclaims an honour card, and you can see them all). Were you to take a losing trump finesse, East might win the king, give West a club ruff and your slam would sink beneath the waves. Although this may be match-point pairs you shouldn't compromise safety for a possible overtrick. Bidding and making a slam that not all pairs will reach will score well. Failing to make the contract is sure to be a disaster.

The solution is to eschew the spade finesse and bash out the ♠A and another trump. Let's look at the full deal:

Hand 3. 6♣ by South. West leads the ♣2

♠ 5 4	♠ A J 8 7 3	♠ K 2
♥ Q 9 5 4 2	♥ 10 7 6	♥ J 3
♦ J 10 8 5 3	♦ A 6	♦ Q 7 4 2
♣ 2	♣ Q 10 4	♣ 9 8 6 5 3
	♠ Q 10 9 6	
	♥ A K 8	
	♦ K 9	
	♣ A K J 7	

[Click here to play hand](#)
Press 'Play' to have a go
Press 'Next' to see Paul play it

Quiz Time ~ Look Before You Leap

Q1 How might you play in 3NT?

Hand 1
South plays in 3NT. West leads the ♠10 to East's ♠A. East switches to the ♥J

♠	K Q J
♥	8 5
♦	A 10 4
♣	Q J 10 6 4
♠	7 4 2
♥	A Q 4
♦	K 7 3
♣	A 9 8 3

W	N	E	S
			1NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Preliminary analysis.

West leads the ♠10 to East's ace and East, seeing little future in continuing the suit, switches to the ♥J. What is the right card to play on the jack?

Can you guarantee your contract?

Q2 How might you play in 4♥?

Hand 2
South plays in 4♥. West leads the ♦K and, in a surprise move, East overtakes with the ♦A to play the ♣J at trick two.

♠	A 4 3
♥	J 10 5 2
♦	9 2
♣	A Q 7 2
♠	K Q 7 2
♥	A K 9 8
♦	J 6
♣	K 9 3

W	N	E	S
			1♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

Preliminary analysis. West leads the ♦K and, in a surprise move, East overtakes with the ♦A to play the ♣J at trick two. What has provoked this unusual defence? How should you play your 4♥ contract?

Answers overleaf

Q1 How might you play in 3NT?

Hand 1
South plays in 3NT. West leads the ♠10 to East's ♠A. East switches to the ♥J

♠ K Q J
♥ 8 5
♦ A 10 4
♣ Q J 10 6 4

♠ 7 4 2
♥ A Q 4
♦ K 7 3
♣ A 9 8 3

W	N	E	S
Pass	3NT	All Pass	1NT

The contract is in danger if you were to finesse the ♥Q. The defenders might clear hearts and leave you exposed should the club finesse lose to the king.

You can guarantee the contract by taking the ♥A, crossing to a spade and running the ♣Q. No harm can befall you now should the finesse lose.

Here's the full deal:

Hand 1. 3NT by South. West leads the ♠10

♠ K Q J
♥ 8 5
♦ A 10 4
♣ Q J 10 6 4

♠ 10 9 8 6 5
♥ K 7 3 2
♦ Q 9
♣ K 7

Click here to
play hand
Press 'Play' to
have a go
Press 'Next' to
see Paul play it

♠ A 3
♥ J 10 9 6
♦ J 8 6 5 2
♣ 5 2

♠ 7 4 2
♥ A Q 4
♦ K 7 3
♣ A 9 8 3

The ♥Q is safe from attack from the Western quarter after the club finesse loses and you must make two spades, one heart, two diamonds and four clubs.

Note that if East has led the ♥J from ♥KJ109 (say) then you may well make the ♥Q in the endgame.

Continued overleaf

Q2 How might you play in 4♥?

Hand 2
South plays in 4♥.
West leads the ♦K
and, in a surprise
move, East
overtakes with the
♦A to play the ♣J at
trick two.

♠ A 4 3
♥ J 10 5 2
♦ 9 2
♣ A Q 7 2

N
W E
S

♠ K Q 7 2
♥ A K 9 8
♦ J 6
♣ K 9 3

W	N	E	S
			1♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

Against your heart game, West leads the ♦K, overtaken by the ace. East switches to the ♣J.

The only rationale for this defence is that East has a

singleton club and is anxious for a ruff. Should you win the club switch on table and finesse trumps you may find yourself in a mess. Here's the full deal:

Hand 1. 4♥ by South. West leads the ♦K

♠ A 4 3
♥ J 10 5 2
♦ 9 2
♣ A Q 7 2

♠ 9 6
♥ Q 4
♦ K Q 10 3
♣ 10 8 6 5 4

♠ K Q 7 2
♥ A K 9 8
♦ J 6
♣ K 9 3

♠ J 10 8 5
♥ 7 6 3
♦ A 8 7 5 4
♣ J

Click here to
play hand
Press 'Play' to
have a go
Press 'Next' to
see Paul play it

West would take the ♥Q, give East a club ruff, regain the lead with the ♦Q and give East a second ruff. Oops.

With club ruffs looming, the best play is to lay down the top trumps, removing as many trumps as fast as possible. True, if East started with ♥Qxx you'd have given up a possible overtrick, but that's a small price to pay. Here, you actually pick up hearts without loss and get an excellent match point score. □



Hand 1
South plays in 6♠.
West leads the
♣Q.
Plan the play.

♠ J 10 9 4 3
♥ A Q 6
♦ A Q 8 5
♣ 4



♠ K Q 8 5 2
♥ 5 3
♦ 4
♣ A K 6 5 2

Let's assume that the trumps divide 2-1. That gives you eleven tricks – four spades, four top tricks in the side suits and three ruffs. What are your options for the twelfth trick? If the clubs break 4-3 you can establish your fifth club, there is also either red suit finesse, or ruffing down the king of diamonds. How are you going to maximise your chance of succeeding?

The answer is to combine as many of these chances as possible by testing them in the correct order. Since there is no possibility that you will want four ruffs in either hand, it is sensible to start by drawing trumps. Both defenders follow, East winning, and a trump is returned. Which option do you go for first?

Don't start with a finesse. If that fails you are down, and it doesn't matter if any other options are working. Instead, you should begin by attempting to ruff the clubs good. If that fails, you will still have other options to return to.

What are you going to discard on the second top club? Remember all your options. One of them is to ruff the diamonds good, and if you want to retain that option, you must throw a heart from dummy. Now ruff the third club, and you will discover that they divide 5-2. Time to try another option.

Let's consider the diamond suit. In isolation, the finesse is easily the best option for two tricks in the suit, but how can we know which red suit finesse to take?

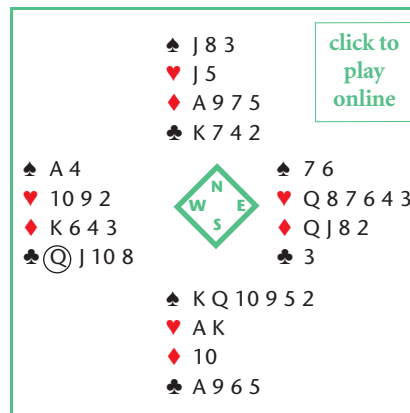
The best combination of chances in the two suits is to try to ruff down the king of diamonds, and if that fails, to take the heart finesse. That play in diamonds is anti-percentage, but it increases the chances from 50:50 for guessing a finesse to take, to 50:50 for the heart finesse *plus* the percentage of the time that the king of diamonds ruffs down.

Play the ace of diamonds and ruff a diamond. Ruff a club to dummy and ruff a third diamond. If the king appears you are home, and if it doesn't, you must fall back on the heart finesse. □

Another example appears in Defence, on page 53



You bid to a great contract, win the first trick, and sit back in your chair to plan the play. Do you? On a surprising number of deals, you will already have lost your contract by winning in the wrong hand. The time to make a plan is right at the start, before you play a card from dummy.



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

How will you play this comfortable-looking contract when West leads the ♣Q?

Suppose you win with the ace and lead the ♠2. A competent West will fly in with the ♠A and return the ♣J. East will ruff dummy's king, and two further club losers will then put you one down.

If anyone has a singleton club, it is much more likely to be East. You should therefore win the first trick with dummy's ♣K. A subsequent club ruff will not hurt you, since East will be ruffing a loser. You will make five trumps, two hearts, the ♦A and two clubs.

Next question overleaf

How would you play 3NT when West leads the ♥4?

♠ A 8 5
♥ K 8 6 2
♦ Q J 10 2
♣ 9 7

♠ K 6 3
♥ Q 9 7 (4)
♦ A 8 5 4
♣ 5 2

♠ Q 9 7 4
♥ J 5 3
♦ 9 6
♣ A 8 4 3

♠ J 10 2
♥ A 10
♦ K 7 3
♣ K Q J 10 6

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

We will see first how the original declarer went down. Since the lead might have been from a suit headed by the ♥QJ, they ran it to their hand. East played the jack and declarer

won with the ace. When they turned to the club suit, East won the second round and returned the ♥5 to the 10, queen and dummy's king.

Hoping to reach the three club winners in his hand, declarer led dummy's ♦Q. East signalled his count with the ♦9 and West held up the ace. When the ♦2 went to South's king, West won and exited safely with a third diamond. Declarer won, cashed another diamond, and exited with a heart. West scored their ♥97 and had to open the spades, giving back one trick. Declarer was one down.

3NT is easily made if declarer wins the opening lead with dummy's ♥K, saving their ♥A as a sure entry. When they play on clubs, East will win the second round and clear the hearts. Declarer then cashes the ♣KQJ and sets up the diamonds. Declarer loses just two hearts and the minor-suit aces, pocketing the game bonus.

Next question overleaf

How will you play the slam when West, not entranced by his side-suit holdings, leads the ♠3? North's 4♣ was a splinter bid, the 5♦ bid showed three key cards.

♠ A K J 2

♥ A K 10 9 4

♦ 7 6 3

♣ 4

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♠ ③

♥ Q 8

♦ K J 10 9 5 2

♣ K J 7 3

♠ 10 9 8 5

♥ J 3 2

♦ Q 8 4

♣ Q 6 5

♠ Q 7 6 4

♥ 7 6 5

♦ A

♣ A 10 9 8 2

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	1♠
2♦	4♣ ^A	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♠
All Pass			

If you can make four heart tricks, to go with the minor-suit aces, adding six trump tricks will give you the slam. You will ruff two

diamonds in hand, rather than ruffing clubs, to avoid having to ruff with an honour. As we will see, it is essential to win trick one with your ♠Q.

You cash the ♦A, cross to the ♥A and ruff a diamond. You then return to the ♥K and ruff another diamond. Before drawing trumps, you must clear the heart suit. East can do no better than return a club, which you win.

Because you won the opening lead in the correct hand, your last trump is the ♠7, and the suit will not be blocked. You lead it to dummy's ♠AKJ, draw trumps and make the ♥109. The slam is yours.

(If you can find a way to make the slam after winning trick one in the dummy, I will pay for your next EBU tournament!)

Next question overleaf

How will you tackle 4♠ when West leads the ♣Q?

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♠ A Q 2			
♥ 7 6 4			
♦ A 7 5 2			
♣ A K 2			
♠ 6 3 ♥ A 9 3 ♦ Q 10 6 ♣ ♠ J 10 9 4 N W E S ♠ 7 4 ♥ Q J 10 8 ♦ K 9 4 ♣ 8 7 5 3			
♠ K J 10 9 8 5 ♥ K 5 2 ♦ J 8 3 ♣ 6			

West	North	East	South
Pass	4♠	All Pass	2♠

If East holds the ♥A, your ♥K will give you the game. Can you see an extra chance?

If the diamonds break 3-3, a long diamond could be your tenth trick. However, if East wins a ducked diamond trick, he will be able to switch through your

♥K, which may give the defenders four tricks.

To keep East off lead, you must make an inspired play – ducking the first trick! You plan to discard two diamonds on the ♣AK and establish the diamond suit with two ruffs. When you play dummy’s ♣2, East contributes a suit preference ♣3, asking for a diamond switch. (An attitude or count signal would be of no value.)

You win West’s ♦6 switch with dummy’s ace and discard your remaining diamonds on the ♣AK. After ruffing a diamond with the ♠8, you cross to the ♠Q and ruff another diamond high. Yes, the diamonds are 3-3! You continue with the king and ace of trumps and claim the contract, pointing at dummy’s established ♦7.

Without your splendid play at trick one, East would have won the ducked diamond trick with the ♦K and switched smartly to the ♥Q. That’s one down!

Next question overleaf

West leads the ♥4 against your spade game, East playing the ♥Q. What plan do you make?

♠ K J 6
♥ 9 8 3
♦ K 9 4
♣ A K 10 9

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♠ 8 3
♥ K J 5 ④
♦ J 8 6 2
♣ 7 5 4

♠ 5 2
♥ Q 10 6 2
♦ A Q 10 7
♣ Q 6 2

♠ A Q 10 9 7 4
♥ A 7
♦ 5 3
♣ J 8 3

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

The original declarer won with the ace, drew trumps and ran the ♣J. East won with the ♣Q and returned the ♥2 to West's jack. A diamond switch then put the contract one down.

It was a careless effort by declarer. West was the danger hand, who could lead through dummy's ♦K. Declarer should have kept the danger hand off lead by ducking the first trick to East's ♥Q. He could then win the next heart, draw trumps and run the ♣J, as before. East could not play diamonds effectively from his side of the table, and dummy's remaining clubs would be good for a diamond discard.

Next question overleaf

I just flipped a £1 coin – ‘Heads’ to finish with an exciting slam hand, ‘Tails’ for a bread-and-butter instructive 3NT. Oh dear... best of three tosses? Apparently not. How would you play this one when West leads the ♦J?

♠ K J 7 2
♥ 10 9 3
♦ A 5
♣ J 7 6 3

♠ 10 8 4
♥ K 7 4
♦ J 10 9 7 4
♣ K 8

♠ A 5
♥ A Q
♦ Q 8 3
♣ A Q 9 5 4 2



♠ Q 9 6 3
♥ J 8 6 5 2
♦ K 6 2
♣ 10

[click to
play
online](#)

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	Pass	1♣
Pass	3NT	All Pass	2NT

At the table, declarer played low from dummy, East winning with the king. Placing declarer with at least ♦Qx remaining, East made an inspired switch to the ♥5.

West won South’s queen with the king and returned the ♥7. East played low on dummy’s ♥10 and was gratified by the appearance of declarer’s ♥A. When West won subsequently with his ♣K, a heart return put the game two down.

East was the ‘danger hand’ on this occasion, because he could lead through the ♥AQ. You won’t need me to tell you that declarer should have won the first trick with dummy’s ♦A. He could then run the ♣J into the safe West hand. With the ♦Q still protected, he would score at least one overtrick. □



In each of the following hands, you are sitting South, and will face a situation that commonly goes awry for aspiring players. Imagine that you are playing in a duplicate with match point scoring. You should make a plan to give yourself the best chance of favourable comparisons with other N/S pairs.

Hand 1

♠ 7 6 3
♥ J 9 8 2
♦ Q J 4
♣ K 7 2

♠ A K Q
♥ Q 10 6 5 3
♦ K 5
♣ A 8 3

S	W	N	E
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

You are in 4♥.
West leads the ♣Q.
Plan your play.

Hand 2

♠ K Q J 10 9 3
♥ 4
♦ K 5
♣ 8 7 6 3

♠ A 4
♥ A 6 2
♦ A 9 7 2
♣ 9 5 4 2

S	W	N	E
1NT	Pass	2♥ ¹	Pass
2♣	Pass	4♣	All Pass
¹ transfer to spades			

You are in 4♣. West leads the ♥K.
Plan your play.

Hand 3

♠ 9 5 4 2
♥ 7 2
♦ A Q 5
♣ A J 8 4

♠ A 7 6 3
♥ A K 8 4
♦ K 7 3
♣ 7 6

S	W	N	E
1NT	Pass	2♣ ¹	Pass
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
4♣	All Pass		
¹ Stayman			

You are in 4♣.
West leads the ♦J.
Plan your play.

Hand 4

♠ 10 7 6 3
♥ –
♦ 7 6 3 2
♣ A Q J 10 4

♠ A K 2
♥ 8 7 3
♦ A K Q 9
♣ K 8 7

S	W	N	E
1♦	4♥	5♦	5♥
6♦	All Pass		

You are in 6♦.
West leads the ♥K.
Plan your play.

Hand 1

♠ 7 6 3
♥ J 9 8 2
♦ Q J 4
♣ K 7 2



♠ A K Q
♥ Q 10 6 5 3
♦ K 5
♣ A 8 3

It's often best to start by counting losers in suit contracts. Here, you can see two trumps, a diamond and a slow club loser. There's nothing to be done about your three top losers in the red suits, so you should focus on dealing with the club.

Dummy's diamonds will provide a parking spot for your third club, but you must be quick about it. If you start drawing trumps instead, the defence will be a step ahead to set up and cash their club trick.

There's one last matter to consider – entries. Should the

defence hold up the first diamond, you'll need an alternative route to dummy. Win the club lead in hand, and immediately start on diamonds. Specifically, lead the ♦K to unblock the suit. If you start with the ♦5, the defenders may counter by grabbing the ♦A to block the suit. Remember, high cards from the short side first.

After winning the ♣A, you lead the ♦K. Even if that holds, you will simply play another diamond, win the club continuation in dummy, and throw your club on a diamond before drawing trumps.

Hand 1. 4♥ by South

♠ 7 6 3
♥ J 9 8 2
♦ Q J 4
♣ K 7 2

♠ 8 5 4
♥ A 7
♦ 10 8 7 2
♣ Q J 10 4

♠ J 10 9 2
♥ K 4
♦ A 9 6 3
♣ 9 6 5

♠ A K Q
♥ Q 10 6 5 3
♦ K 5
♣ A 8 3

[Click here to play hand](#)
[Press 'Play' to have a go](#)
[Press 'Next' to see Ben play it](#)

S	W	N	E
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

You are in 4♥.
West leads the ♣Q.
Plan your play.

Continued overleaf

Hand 2

♠ K Q J 10 9 3
♥ 4
♦ K 5
♣ 8 7 6 3



♠ A 4
♥ A 6 2
♦ A 9 7 2
♣ 9 5 4 2

Partner has done well to get you to game via a transfer. You had better make it. Counting your losers, you can see four clubs only. You've no way of discarding them, so you'll have to hope for a 3-2 split and to establish the long card. That will take a while, requiring you to lose the lead three times.

Naturally, you might consider drawing trumps first, but say spades break 4-1. You will then have only two trumps left. The defence will be a tempo ahead, able to force the dummy twice in hearts then cash a heart or two upon winning the third club. That's no good.

You must rely on a 3-2 club split, but there's no reason to

bank on 3-2 trumps too. By preserving the trumps in your hand, you'll be able to absorb the fourth round of hearts with the short trump holding, provided you start on clubs immediately. It is frequently right to play on a side suit before drawing trumps.

You win the ♥A, give up a club, ruff the second heart, surrender another club, take the next heart force in dummy, then persist with a third club. If the defence plays a fourth round of hearts, you can ruff high in hand and draw trumps. If they play a diamond instead, win it and draw trumps, starting with the ace to unblock the suit.

Hand 2. 4♣ by South

♠ K Q J 10 9 3
♥ 4
♦ K 5
♣ 8 7 6 3

♠ 8 7 6 2
♥ K Q J 10 3
♦ 10 6
♣ Q 10

♠ 5
♥ 9 8 7 5
♦ Q J 8 4 3
♣ A K J

♠ A 4
♥ A 6 2
♦ A 9 7 2
♣ 9 5 4 2

Click here to play hand
Press 'Play' to have a go
Press 'Next' to see Ben play it

S	W	N	E
1NT	Pass	2♥ ¹	Pass
2♣	Pass	4♣	All Pass

¹ transfer to spades

You are in 4♣. West leads the ♥K.
Plan your play.

Continued overleaf

Hand 3

♠ 9 5 4 2
♥ 7 2
♦ A Q 5
♣ A J 8 4



♠ A 7 6 3
♥ A K 8 4
♦ K 7 3
♣ 7 6

S	W	N	E
1NT	Pass	2♣ ¹	Pass
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
4♠	All Pass		
¹ Stayman			

You are in 4♠.
West leads the ♦J.
Plan your play.

You can see a club loser and, assuming a 3-2 split, two spade losers. You also have two slow losers in either hearts or clubs, depending on which hand you're treating as the master. Ruffing hearts will doubtless be an easier task as you don't need to lose the lead, so consider this from South's perspective.

You're aiming to ruff two hearts on table, but to do so right away might risk conceding an over-ruff to East. That could be fatal if East started with two trumps, leaving West with two spade tricks. It follows that you'd like to draw a couple of rounds of trumps before ruffing any hearts.

If you play off the ♠A and another, you risk the defenders being able to draw a

third round, robbing you of a critical ruff. It is much better to duck the first spade, keeping the ace for control.

One more thing – consider your entries. You're planning on cashing the ♠A then ruffing a heart, so you must have a route back to hand to take the second heart ruff. It follows that you should win the opening diamond lead in dummy.

So, win the ♦A and duck a spade. Take the second diamond on table too, then cash the ♠A, ♥AK, ruff a heart, and come to hand with the ♦K to ruff your last heart. You will lose just two spades and a club. Even if they ruff the third diamond they are ruffing with the top spade – something they were always going to win.

Hand 3. 4♠ by South

♠ 9 5 4 2
♥ 7 2
♦ A Q 5
♣ A J 8 4

♠ K 10 8
♥ Q 10 9 5 3
♦ J 10
♣ Q 10 2

♠ Q J
♥ J 6
♦ 9 8 6 4 2
♣ K 9 5 3

Click here to play hand
Press 'Play' to have a go
Press 'Next' to see Ben play it

♠ A 7 6 3
♥ A K 8 4
♦ K 7 3
♣ 7 6

Continued overleaf

You took a risk with 6♦, assuming extremely short hearts in dummy, and it appears to have paid off. You have a spade and three hearts to lose, but two of those major suit losers will go on dummy's long clubs and two hearts can be ruffed in dummy. You can even afford a trump loser.

On a 3-2 trump split, you could simply ruff the opening lead and cross to hand twice in diamonds, once to ruff another heart and another to draw trumps, chalking up an overtrick. There's a snag, though. If trumps are 4-1, you'll be in big trouble, unable to give up a trump without losing an avalanche of heart tricks. Running clubs won't help either, with the defence poised to ruff the third club and leave you with two major suit losers.

If you are to lose a trump trick, you had better do so now, while you can still ruff a heart

return in dummy. The best play for twelve tricks is to ruff the opening heart lead then finesse the ♦9 at trick two! You can win the return, ruff a heart, then come to hand with a diamond (a spade is your safest bet if the return was a trump) in order to draw the remaining trumps, then run clubs. If East follows with the ♦10 or ♦J at trick two, you should still duck, to guard against four diamonds with West.

At match point pairs, you could make a case for going all out for a 3-2 trump split. However, given that you've done well to reach an understrength slam, you should play as safely as possible, knowing that merely making the contract will give you a good score. Note also that finessing the ♦9 gives you a chance of succeeding even when East has all five trumps, provided he also holds at least four clubs. □

Hand 4

♠ 10 7 6 3
♥ –
♦ 7 6 3 2
♣ A Q J 10 4



♠ A K 2
♥ 8 7 3
♦ A K Q 9
♣ K 8 7

S	W	N	E
1♦	4♥	5♦	5♥
6♦	All Pass		

You are in 6♦.
West leads the ♥K.
Plan your play.

Hand 4. 6♦ by South

♠ 10 7 6 3
♥ –
♦ 7 6 3 2
♣ A Q J 10 4

♠ 5
♥ K Q J 10 9 5 2
♦ J 10 8 4
♣ 3

♠ Q J 9 8 4
♥ A 6 4
♦ 5
♣ 9 6 5 2

♠ A K 2
♥ 8 7 3
♦ A K Q 9
♣ K 8 7

Click here to play hand
Press 'Play' to have a go
Press 'Next' to see Ben play it



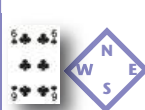
For as long as bridge has existed, the defence has been on the back foot. Declarer has full knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses while the defence has to fight through a fog of uncertainty. To combat this, defensive signalling was devised and there is no better signal than the humble attitude signal.

Most of you will know about playing attitude at trick one – high to encourage partner's lead (to help avoid the dreaded Bath coup) and it's worth having a discard system for the middle of the hand. But is this enough? Often we find ourselves on lead at trick two or three, and if partner hasn't been able to give an attitude signal, we may find it rather difficult to choose the right switch.

In such situations, it is worth considering if you can ask partner for help ...

4♠ by South. West leads the ♣6

♠ A J 5 3
♥ 6 2
♦ 10 3
♣ A K Q J 9



♠ K 7
♥ Q J 10 8
♦ A 8 7 6
♣ 5 4 2

West	North	East	South
Pass	4♠	All Pass	2♠ ¹
¹ Weak with six spades			

Partner leads the ♣6 against 4♠ and declarer plays low from dummy to win in hand with the ♣10. Declarer then plays the ♠Q out of hand and runs it to your ♠K. How should you defend?

So here we are, on lead and in need of an accurate switch. With all those winning clubs in dummy, we need to cash our winners before declarer has a chance to throw away their losers. So which suit

should we switch to? The ♥Q (top of a sequence) looks natural and could be very successful if the full hand is like this:

South plays 4♠. West leads the ♣6

♠ A J 5 3
♥ 6 2
♦ 10 3
♣ A K Q J 9



♠ 8
♥ A 9 7 4 3
♦ Q 9 5 4 2
♣ 6 3

♠ Q 10 9 6 4 2

♥ K 5

♦ K J

♣ 10 8 7

If this is the layout, we can beat the contract by switching to the ♥Q, taking a finesse through declarer's ♥K and then also scoring the ♦A. Wouldn't that be a brilliant defence?

Then again, the full hand may be something like the one overleaf:

South plays 4♠. West leads the ♣6

♠ 8	♠ A J 5 3	♠ K 7
♥ K 9 7 4 3	♥ 6 2	♥ Q J 10 8
♦ K J 9 5 4	♦ 10 3	♦ A 8 7 6
♣ 6 3	♣ A K Q J 9	♣ 5 4 2

♠ Q 10 9 6 4 2
 ♥ A 5
 ♦ Q 2
 ♣ 10 8 7



Now, switching to the ♥Q isn't so clever. Declarer will hop up with the ♥A and take their eleven tricks – making an overtrick when you could have held them to game by attacking diamonds instead.

Both of these layouts seem just as likely as each other, so what are we to do? Simply toss a coin and hope for the best? Of course not. Defence is a partnership endeavour, and we should simply ask partner for help. The correct defence is to cash the ♦A.

Normally, you would lead an ace from an AK sequence, but in the middle of the hand cashing an unsupported ace can be useful as a way to ask partner's opinion. How will partner react when we cash the ♦A?

With the ♦K (as in the second layout) partner will surely encourage. After all, their holding in diamonds couldn't be better and

that would let us know that it was safe to continue the suit.

And what of the first layout where partner has the ♦Q and the ♥A? Normally, partner would encourage with a queen but with the doubleton diamond in dummy, partner can see that the third round of diamonds isn't important. West should discourage, suggesting an interest in the other suit. After partner discourages, we will likely switch to hearts and that will allow us to take our two heart tricks with the finesse.

Asking partner for help can be vital when you need to cash your tricks without giving up the lead.

These sorts of plays can also be good when you are unsure if partner can score a ruff as shown overleaf:

4♠ by South. West leads the ♦3

♠ A 9 8 5 4 2
♥ K 3
♦ Q J
♣ 7 4 2



♠ 7
♥ 8 7
♦ A 10 8 7 5 4
♣ A K 10 9

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♥ ¹	1♦	1NT
Pass	4♠	Pass	2♠
¹ Transfer to spades			

West leads the ♦3 against 4♠ and it looks to be an obvious singleton (it can hardly be low from an honour when declarer has promised a diamond stop). As such, it seems very natural to win the ♦A and return a *low* diamond (suit preference and asking for a club return).

The problem with this is that the ♦3 may not be a singleton. It could be top of a

doubleton from ♦32. And wouldn't that be unlucky! Declarer would win the diamond return, draw trumps and then discard a losing club on the ♦K (which would look really bad if West had the ♣Q).

So what is the solution to this problem? As you may have guessed, we should try to ask partner for help, and we can do so by cashing the ♣A. On this trick, partner will give us an attitude signal and that should set us on the right path for the defence.

Let's consider how partner will react when we cash the ♣A. Let's say West holds:

♠ J 10 3
♥ 10 9 6 5 4 2
♦ 3
♣ J 8 5

and after receiving a discouraging signal we will switch back to diamonds to hopefully give them a ruff.

♠ J 10 3
♥ 10 9 6 4 2
♦ 3 2
♣ Q 8 5

On the ♣A, partner will have a pretty easy decision. With a bad holding in clubs, they will discourage with the ♣5

With this holding, partner may be a little uncertain, but they should encourage on the

♣A. They may be worried that the ♣A is alone and not from ♣AK but it's not as if they want us to switch to a different suit. As such they should just encourage, suggesting a good holding in clubs and/or a lack of interest in the other suits.

And what if partner has both the ♣Q and a singleton?

♠ J 10 3
♥ 10 9 6 5 4 2
♦ 3
♣ Q 8 5

With this hand, partner may think to encourage clubs because they hold the ♣Q, but they should discourage because they

want us to switch back to diamonds. After scoring the ruff, West will go back to clubs and this way the defence will take all the tricks entitled to them.

This business of cashing an ace to get a signal from partner is very useful and can appear more often than you think. Let's look at one last hand to illustrate the point.

Continued overleaf

4♠ by South. West leads the ♣6

♠ K J 5
♥ 6 3 2
♦ 4 3
♣ A K Q J 8

♠ A 7 3
♥ Q J 10 8
♦ K 8 7 6
♣ 5 4

West	North	East	South
Pass	4♠	All Pass	2♠ ¹
¹ Weak with six spades			

Partner leads the ♣6 against 4♠ and declarer plays low from dummy to win in hand with the ♣10. Declarer then plays a spade to the king and your ace. How should you defend from here?

This hand is very similar to the first one we looked at. Declarer has an excess of tricks in dummy so we need to make the

most of our lead while we can. Unfortunately, we no longer have an ace to cash and we truly are on a guess now. If partner has the ♥A, we should switch to the ♥Q. If partner has the ♦A, we should switch to a diamond.

Without an ace to cash, it may seem as if we have no way of asking partner for help. But that's not quite true, is it? While we no longer have the ♦A, we do have one ace at our disposal. The ♠A.

On this hand the right play is to duck the first spade! Partner is marked with a singleton on the auction, so when declarer plays a second spade to our ace, partner will be able to make an attitude discard!

If partner discards a high heart or a low diamond (perhaps holding ♥A94), we will switch to the ♥Q. And if partner discards a high diamond, we will switch to a diamond. In either case, we find the right switch because we took the time to ask partner for help.

Try the quiz overleaf



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Q1 Partner needs our help! They've just cashed an ace and we need to give a suitable attitude signal (high to encourage and low to discourage). What should we do on each of these hands?

4♥ by South. West leads the ♠2

♠ 9 8 7
 ♥ Q 10 7
 ♦ A K Q J
 ♣ 9 8 3

♠ K J 6 ②
 ♥ 5
 ♦ 10 8 6 2
 ♣ Q J 7 2



West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

You lead the ♠2 against 4♥ and partner wins trick one with the ace. Partner then places the ♣A on the table. How should you signal?

A Ordinarily, we would encourage holding the queen when partner cashes the ace, but here we should be more considerate. We know that we led low from ♠KJ but partner doesn't. Partner might be worried that we led from Qxxx (in which case it could be right to switch to clubs). Partner's cashing of the ♣A is a considerate play and we should act in kind.

On the ♣A we should discourage, prompting partner to switch back to spades where we can take two more tricks. Partner will not have the ♣K unless declarer opened with just 10 points.

Q2 4♠ by South. West leads the ♥A

♠ 9 6 2
 ♥ 8 7
 ♦ A K Q 10 3 2
 ♣ Q 5

♠ 10 8 3
 ♥ 10 2
 ♦ 7 4
 ♣ J 10 9 7 6 2




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

Partner leads the ♥A against 4♠ (presumably from an AK sequence). Declarer plays low from dummy. Should you encourage?

A Yes, you should encourage. You may not have the queen or king, but if partner continues hearts you can score a ruff. When defending a suit contract, you should encourage with a doubleton if partner leads an ace at trick one. Partner will then continue with the king and give you a ruff on the third round.

On this hand you may even score two ruffs if you can put partner back on lead with a club.

Quiz continued overleaf

Q³ 4♥ by South. West leads the ♠2

♠ 9 8 7
 ♥ Q 10 7
 ♦ A K Q J
 ♣ 9 8 3

♠ Q 10 6 ②
 ♥ 5
 ♦ 10 8 6 2
 ♣ Q J 7 2



West	North	East	South
Pass	2♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	2♥

You lead the ♠2 against 4♥ and partner wins trick one with the ace. Partner then places the ♣A on the table. How should you signal?

A This time our spade holding is worse than partner might expect so we should encourage the continuation of clubs. We know that declarer holds the ♠K because of partner's ♠A at trick one so there is little future in that suit. But if partner has cashed the ♣A from ♣AK, we want to make it clear that a third round of the suit will be appreciated.

Q⁴ 4♠ by South. West leads the ♥A

♠ 9 6 2
 ♥ 8 7
 ♦ A K Q 10 3 2
 ♣ Q 5

♠ 8 4 3
 ♥ 10 2
 ♦ 7 4
 ♣ K 10 9 7 6 2



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

Partner leads the ♥A against 4♠ (presumably from an AK sequence). Declarer plays low from dummy. Should you encourage?

A No, you should not encourage. While it is true that you have a doubleton and can possibly score a ruff, there is one big problem. You can't over-ruff the dummy! When partner plays the third heart, declarer will ruff with the ♠9 and draw trumps. Declarer will cash all of dummy's diamonds and any club tricks you have will disappear.

When you discourage, partner should try a switch to clubs and that will work very well when partner has the ♣A.

Q⁵ 4♠ by South. West leads the ♣6

♠ A J 5 3
 ♥ 6 2
 ♦ 8 3
 ♣ A K Q J 8

♠ 8
 ♥ A Q 7 4 3
 ♦ K 10 9 5 2
 ♣ ⑥ 3



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

¹ Weak with six spades

You lead the ♣6 and declarer plays low from dummy and wins in hand with the ♠10. Declarer runs the ♠Q to partner's ♠K. Partner then tables the ♦A.

A You may think it normal to encourage. After all, you have the ♦K! Partner will continue the suit. In with the ♦K you will cash the ♥A and take declarer one off.

Wouldn't you prefer two off? Consider what will happen if you discourage on the ♦A. What will partner switch to? Obviously, they will try their luck with a heart, and isn't that exactly what you want? A heart lead through declarer's ♥K will give you two heart tricks as well as the ♦AK and partner's ♠K. Two down. ☐



It is widely acknowledged that the more often you can make your opponents guess, the more likely they are to go wrong. Whether your partner is human or robot, they are equally vulnerable to doing the wrong thing if made to guess. Take over from East in this deal from a *Funbridge* game. Game All.

♠ Q J ♥ 7 5 3 2 ♦ K 7 3 ♣ A J 6 2			
♠ K 9 7 5 3 2 ♥ 10 4 ♦ J 5 4 ♣ 9 3		♠ A 10 8 ♥ 9 8 6 ♦ Q 10 9 2 ♣ Q 10 8	
♠ 6 4 ♥ A K Q J ♦ A 8 6 ♣ K 7 5 4			
West	North	East	South
Pass	2♣ ²	Pass	1NT ¹
Pass	4♥	All Pass	2♥
¹ 15-17, ² Stayman			

Your partner leads the ♠5 and you win with the ace, declarer following with the ♠4. How should you continue?

Partner has led a low spade, so you can reasonably place them with an honour, which obviously has to be the king. There is only room for them to hold between four and six points, so they will also have the ♦J, the ♥J or the ♥Q. Your ♣Q is quite likely to be a trick and, if partner holds either the ♦J or the ♥Q, you will probably also make a trick in one of the red suits.

It seems that the contract will go down most of the time. So, what could go wrong? Declarer's best chance is that you give your partner a losing option. What is the distribution of the spade suit? The play to trick one is certainly consistent with partner holding six and declarer two. (If declarer has a third spade, he will always be able to ruff it in dummy, whatever you do.) Move around the table and mentally put yourself in partner's shoes. How do you think he might defend if you return the ♠10 (or the ♠8) at trick two?

Your partner does not know that you hold potential tricks in both minor suits. They will be looking desperately for where two more defensive tricks might come from.

There is a danger they will play a third round of spades, hoping you hold the doubleton and that you can over-ruff dummy. Instead they will be giving declarer a ruff-and-discard, potentially allowing him to dispose of a minor suit loser.

You know that a third round of spades is not a winning choice for the defence, so your job is to avoid putting partner in a position that gives him that losing option. Exit safely with a trump at trick two – not what you would have done if you could over-ruff dummy on the third round of spades. By the time partner regains the lead with the ♠K, the spade position is likely to be clear. In due course, declarer will lose four tricks and you can enter a score in the plus column.

Robots probably don't notice, so your thoughtful defence will go unappreciated, but a human partner will appreciate your careful play. There are many ways that you can be a good partner. The fewer opportunities you give your partner to go wrong, the fewer mistakes they will make. □



You have cashed the ace and king of a suit and you know that both your partner and declarer have no more of the suit. You want to try to give partner a trump promotion, but is there a danger? If you hold an outside ace, and declarer has a singleton in that suit, it will be discarded on this third round of your suit and you will simply have traded your ace for a trump trick. It might be imperative to first cash the ace, before giving partner the trump promotion.

How can you be sure that this is the right way to defend? These are elements to consider:

- ❖ First, is there a danger of my winner disappearing when declarer discards instead of ruffing?
- ❖ Second, is one ruff sufficient for a trump promotion?
- ❖ Third, if I cash my winner first, is a trump promotion sufficient to bring the contract down?

If the answer is yes to each of these questions, cash your winner first.

1

4♠ by South. West leads the ♣10

♠ 4 2
♥ K Q 6 3
♦ A K
♣ K ① 9 8 2





♠ 6 3
♥ A 10 7 4
♦ 7 5 3
♣ A Q 7 4

You are defending 4♠ from the East seat. Partner leads the ♣10, which is covered with the jack and you win the queen. You cash the ace, and both declarer and partner follow. What card do you now play?

The danger is that South has a singleton heart which they throw on the third club. Partner wins a trump trick but at the cost of a heart trick. The solution is to cash the ♥A and *then* play a third club.

2

4♠ by South. West leads the ♣A

♠ 7 4 2
♥ K 8 5
♦ A K
♣ Q J 7 5 ③

♠ J 10 5
♥ A J 6 3
♦ 8 4
♣ A K 8 4



This time you are in the West seat defending 4♠. You lead out the ace and king of clubs, with both partner and declarer following. If partner can ruff with the ♠9, you can score a trump promotion, so should you play a club now and hope?

Again you must cash your ♥A first. If you do not and declarer holds a singleton heart, it will be discarded instead of over-ruffing the nine. Cash it first, and your partner's nine will score you the promotion you need to defeat the contract.

Continued overleaf

Cash Winners Before a Promotion

by Heather Dhondy

3

3♥ by South. West leads the ♦A

♠ K 7 6 3
♥ 4 3 2
♦ Q J 8 ④
♣ 6 3

♠ A Q J 4
♥ 9 8
♦ A K 10 6 3
♣ 4 2



You are West defending 3♥. You lead out the ace and king of diamonds, and partner peters (plays high-low) to show a doubleton. What do you play now?

Don't cash the ♠A! A trump promotion is not going to be achieved with the third round of diamonds, but suppose partner holds ♥A107? You can play a third round of diamonds immediately which will be ruffed and over-ruffed (♥7 and ♥J). Now declarer, unable to get to dummy, must play a top trump from hand (say ♥K) which partner wins. Crucially, partner will be able to put you on lead with a spade to play a fourth round of diamonds which is ruffed and over-ruffed (♥10, ♥Q). This promotes your ♥8. □



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Test Your Options in the Right Order

by Heather Dhondy



4♠ by South. West leads the ♥A

♠ K 8	
♥ 9 8 7 2	
♦ A Q 6 3	
♣ K Q J	

♠ A 7	
♥ A	
♦ 9 7 5 4 2	
♣ 9 7 5 4 2	

South	North
3♠	4♠

You lead the ace of hearts, partner follows with the six, and declarer the three. How do you plan the defence?

You can be sure that partner holds one of the ♣A or ♦K and if you guess right, then you can defeat the contract, so let's approach it from the other angle. What's the worst that can happen if you guess wrong?

If you play partner for the ace of clubs, but declarer holds it, there will be several fast tricks in dummy on which declarer can dispose of losers. On the other hand, if you play partner for the king of diamonds, and declarer has it, you can see that partner will be short enough in diamonds to ruff in before any discards can be taken and you will have time to switch tack and play partner for the club when you are in with your trump.

Finally, if declarer rises with the ace of diamonds and plays a trump to your ace, you will have to decide where partner's high card is. By this time, however, you will have received the all-important signal from partner on the diamonds.

Therefore, you should play on diamonds since that leaves both options open. ☐

Another example appears in Declarer Play, on page 32

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I usually start these Discovery articles with some preamble about the theme, but this year let's dive straight in. There is a theme, and hopefully you can spot it as you try the hands.

Remember that with the new format, if you think it matters you need to specify which card of a suit you are leading.

You are sitting West. Choose your lead:

Hand 1
 ♠ 9 5
 ♥ K 9 6 2
 ♦ A 6 5 2
 ♣ Q J 7

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	4♠	All Pass

What would you lead in teams and in pairs?

Hand 3
 ♠ A Q 7 4
 ♥ K
 ♦ K Q 10 4
 ♣ 8 7 4 2

South	West	North	East
1♥	Dble	All Pass	

What would you lead in teams and in pairs?

Hand 2
 ♠ A 4 2
 ♥ A K 9 8 3
 ♦ 7 4
 ♣ K 8 4

South	West	North	East
3♦ ¹	3♥	5♦	1♣
Pass	Dble	All Pass	Pass
¹ Pre-emptive			

What would you lead in teams and in pairs?

Hand 4
 ♠ A K 4 3
 ♥ K 10 5 2
 ♦ A 7
 ♣ 10 9 5

South	West	North	East
Dble	Redble ¹	Pass	1♦
1♥	Dble ²	All Pass	Pass
¹ Penalty-seeking, ² Penalties			

What would you lead in teams and in pairs?

Continued overleaf

Hand 5

♠ A K 4 2
♥ 10
♦ K Q 3 2
♣ 10 9 8 3

South	West	North	East
2♥ ¹	Dble	All Pass	
¹ Natural and weak			

What would you lead in teams and in pairs?

Hand 6

♠ Q J 7 3
♥ K J 5 2
♦ 8 6
♣ K 5 4

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	All Pass		

What would you lead in teams and in pairs?

Hand 7

♠ 8 7 5 3 2
♥ A 5
♦ A 9 8 2
♣ 9 8

South	West	North	East
		1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	4♠	All Pass

What would you lead in teams and in pairs?

Hand 8

♠ 6 3 2
♥ K 7 6 2
♦ 7 5 3
♣ 6 5 4

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♣	Pass	4NT ¹	Pass
5♣ ²	Pass	6♣	All Pass

¹ Roman Keycard Blackwood (spades),

² Two out of five of the four aces and the ♠K, plus the ♠Q

What would you lead in teams and in pairs?

Continued overleaf

You are sitting West. Choose your lead in teams and in pairs:

Hand 1	
♠	9 5
♥	K 9 6 2
♦	A 6 5 2
♣	Q J 7

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	4♠	All Pass

So, did you spot the theme? Did you notice that all of the hands are suit contracts? So the theme this year is when you should lead trumps and when you should not. In general trumps leads are not a great idea as they tend to be very passive. Why are they passive? What does declarer do on most suit hands – draw trumps. So it must be a passive defence for you to start doing that for them. Club players tend to lead trumps way too often and in general will lead trumps unless they have a **good** alternative, whereas an expert player tends to lead trumps only if they have nothing but **bad** alternatives. There are, as ever, exceptions though and this article is about those exceptions and how to spot them.

(a) **♠9/5: 2 marks.** On auctions like this, when responder has simply leapt to game, almost always one of two types of hand is coming down: either a hand with a load of trumps and not much else, or alternatively a hand with four trumps and a side suit that responder is hoping can be developed for tricks. In the first case you will achieve nothing as declarer will have so many trumps that leading one will have no effect, and in the second case you will just be helping declarer to do what they want – draw trumps and establish the side suit. So a trump lead is really not a good idea here.

(b) **♥2: 7 marks, ♥9/6: 3 marks, ♥K: 1 mark.** A heart lead is an attempt to establish some tricks so that when you get in you can cash them, but a lead away from a king is an aggressive lead and need helps from partner in the suit. There are safer ways to set up some tricks. If you must lead a heart then lead the right card, and of course do not lead the king – you might make it later even if a heart was wrong, but not if you lead it!

(c) **♦A: 2 marks; ♦other: 1 mark.** A computer might lead the ♦A, but that is because it will then always know whether to continue or switch as it is playing double dummy (it knows all four hands). It is a very dangerous lead as it will set up any high cards declarer has in the suit, but at least it is better than underleading it. There are occasions when it is right to underlead an ace, but this is not one of them. Remember it is declarer rather than dummy that will have most of the high cards.

(d) **♣Q: 10 marks, ♣J: 2 marks, ♣7: 4 marks.** I would look no further than the ♣Q on this deal. It is pretty safe (if dummy comes down with A/K10x(x) that is just unlucky) and it will set up tricks whenever partner has the ace or king. Please lead the right card – ♣J or ♣7 will simply confuse partner.

Pairs bonus: The ♣Q: 5 marks. The ♣Q is even more of a standout lead.

Continued overleaf

Hand 2

♠ A 4 2
♥ A K 9 8 3
♦ 7 4
♣ K 8 4

South	West	North	East
3♦ ¹	3♥	5♦	1♣
Pass	Dble	All Pass	Pass
¹ Pre-emptive			

What would you lead in teams and in pairs?

Partner has opened the bidding and we have a good 14 count and the opponents have the effrontery to contract for 11 tricks! Clearly they are sacrificing so we must punish them to the fullest extent. Well done doubling, now what do you lead?

(a) ♠A: 2 marks, ♠other: 1 mark. The ♠A is a wild and unnecessary lead, only beaten in its wildness by a low spade. What are you hoping to achieve with a spade lead here?

(b) ♥A/K: 7 marks, ♥other: 0 marks. How can it wrong to lead from an AK I hear you say. Usually it isn't. But this time it is. Because this is the right lead...

(c) ♦any: 10 marks. The opponents clearly have loads of trumps between them and I have just told you not to lead a trump in that situation, yet here I am telling you that here it is the right lead?! So what is different? The difference here is that the opponents are clearly sacrificing – they have at most about 16 HCP between them. So where are they going to make tricks from? Not clubs as both of you have them, not hearts as you have them and not spades as you have some and partner very likely has a few high cards there (where else can they be?). So the **only** tricks declarer can make are trumps and extra tricks come from ruffing. So it is essential that you get as many trumps out as possible to stop these ruffs. Which is why a trump is better than a heart – it

would hardly be surprising if dummy came down with a singleton heart or club (they must have something for this leap to 5♦ after all). So you want to be able to lead a trump, win the next lead and lead another trump.

My experience is that club players lead trumps a lot of the time against contracts bid to make and almost never against contracts that are bid as sacrifices. Their results would improve dramatically if they did it the other way round!

(d) ♣K: 6 marks, ♣8: 1 mark, ♣4: 5 marks
They say it is never wrong to lead partner's suit. Well it can be – particularly when you should be leading trumps. I give the ♣K a higher mark simply because if it holds you can then switch to a trump if that is appropriate.

Pairs bonus: ♦any: 5 marks. A trump is just as clear cut at pairs. You need to take the maximum to get at all of your available matchpoints.

Continued overleaf

Hand 3

♠ A Q 7 4
♥ K
♦ K Q 10 4
♣ 8 7 4 2

South	West	North	East
1♥	Dble	All Pass	

What would you lead in teams and in pairs?

The next two hands are further examples of when it is almost always right to lead trumps – when you are defending a low level doubled contract and either you or partner is known to have a good trump holding.

In the first of these partner has taken the very unusual step of passing your one level take-out double. This is only done when partner has a *very* good trump holding. After all, there are plenty of other bids partner can make with a moderate heart holding, such as 1NT. So partner must feel this is definitely going off. Once again your aim is to prevent declarer making cheap trump tricks.

- (a) ♠A: 2 marks, ♠other: 1 mark. Again there is absolutely no need to make a very risky spade lead.
- (b) ♥K: 10 marks. This is the lead partner wants and expects. Partner is looking to draw declarer's trumps and then make your side winners. If partner wasn't happy to have a trump lead, they should

not have passed 1♥ doubled. 'But I might make my singleton ♥K' I hear you say. No you won't! Declarer will not be playing trumps, declarer will be trying to get cheap ruffs.

- (c) ♦K: 7 marks; ♦other: 1 mark. The ♦K would be a good lead in pretty much any circumstances except these where a trump should be led.
- (d) ♣any: 4 marks. This is a very passive lead – and it can be argued that this will not give declarer any tricks to which they are not entitled. Well maybe so and maybe not. For example, if partner has a good hand, as well as good trumps, declarer may not have many entries to dummy and so this may take finesses that they couldn't otherwise take.

Pairs bonus: ♥K: 5 marks. The same lead for the same reasons.

Continued overleaf

Hand 4

♠ A K 4 3
♥ K 10 5 2
♦ A 7
♣ 10 9 5

South	West	North	East
Dble	Redble ¹	Pass	Pass
1♥	Dble ²	All Pass	

¹ Penalty-seeking, ² Penalties

What would you lead in teams and in pairs?

You have the huge majority of the points and expect to have a game. You therefore need to get this enough down to compensate for your game. The only place extra tricks are coming from on this hand is trumps. It is amazing how often dummy turns up with three trumps and a ruffing value. So you need to get these trumps out as soon as possible.

(a) ♠A/K: 7 marks, ♠other: 1 mark. If I weren't going to lead a trump I would of course lead a top spade. But you may well discover that you should have led a trump and you have lost the tempo to stop a spade ruff.

(b) ♥2: 10 marks, ♥5: 9 marks, ♥other: 5 marks. Declarer probably has four hearts only (no overcall) and dummy probably exactly three (they didn't bid 1♥ over the Redouble and didn't run from 1♥ doubled) so partner probably has exactly 2. Our hope is that partner can get in and lead a second trump through (if not we will lead a second one ourselves). They we can draw

trumps and start on our side suit winners.

(c) ♦A: 4 marks, ♦7: 1 mark. Just because you have the ace in partner's suit doesn't mean you have to immediately cash it. Sometimes declarer has the king! And if not, you are helping declarer to make small trumps by potentially ruffing diamonds.

(d) ♣10: 5 marks, ♣other: 1 mark. This is a passive lead. But you don't want to be passive on this hand. You don't want declarer to be able to go about their business quietly. They are likely to make too many tricks through ruffing, so you will not get a big enough penalty with a passive lead.

Pairs bonus: ♥2: 5 marks. The same lead for the same reason. Here it is absolutely imperative that you beat this enough to compensate for your game. +500 in 1♥ doubled against +600 in 3NT is no great worry in teams (3 IMPs) but is a 0% at pairs. +800 on the other hand is great at either form of scoring 🤔.

Continued overleaf

Hand 5

♠ A K 4 2
♥ 10
♦ K Q 3 2
♣ 10 9 8 3

South	West	North	East
2♥ ¹	Dble	All Pass	

¹ Natural and weak

What would you lead in teams and in pairs?

OK, here we are again doubling low level contracts. So we should lead a trump right? Errr... no, sorry we shouldn't. I told you there were exceptions. Bridge is a tough game – that's why we play it.

So, what is different here? There are two main differences:

- 1 There is no indication that we have game on, so our primary concern is to make sure the contract goes off, rather than assuming we are beating it by three or so. Remember that 2♥ doubled making is a complete disaster as it is game.

- 2 Our trump holding may be a lot more fragile. There is a **big** difference between 1♥–Dble–All Pass and 2♥–Dble–All Pass. Declarer has a lot more trumps (usually six), dummy has few (almost always no more than two so there are no ruffing values) and partner's trump holding will often be a lot more fragile. What for example is partner supposed to do with ♠xx ♥K9xxx ♦xxx ♣xxx? Bidding a 3-card minor at the three level hardly appeals. So in 1♥ doubled partner should want a trump lead whereas in 2♥ doubled partner almost always **doesn't** want a trump lead. The aim in such a defence is to cash all of our outside winners and leave declarer trump bound so they end up having to lead away from their trumps round to partner.

- (a) ♠A/K: 10 marks, ♠other: 1 mark. For the reasons given above, this is the auction you should be leading an AK on. You will hold the lead and should know

what to do next. I bet you are glad I have finally given you such a hand!

- (b) ♥10: 1 mark. This is now my least favourite lead!
- (c) ♦K: 7 marks; ♦other: 1 mark. Again a decent lead but occasionally dummy will hit with ♦AJ to some number and you have given away tempo. But if I was told I couldn't lead a spade I would lead this.
- (d) ♣10: 4 marks, ♣other: 2 marks. This is passive and will probably be fine, but once in a while it is disastrous. Dummy hits with ♣AKQ and declarer has a singleton (or worse still a void) and gaily throws away several losers. This is why it is so important to lead a top spade so that you can 'look at the table' as the phrase goes. One look at dummy is likely to tell you what the right thing to do is.

Pairs bonus: ♠A/K: 5 marks. The same lead for the same reasons.

Continued overleaf

Hand 6	
♠	Q J 7 3
♥	K J 5 2
♦	8 6
♣	K 5 4

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	All Pass		

What would you lead in teams and in pairs?

This is another class of hands where it is almost automatic to lead a trump – when the opposition have stopped at a low level in a second suit. Think about the auction and what it means. Declarer has at least five hearts and at least four clubs; dummy has at least four spades and a weak hand (otherwise they wouldn't have passed). Crucially dummy prefers clubs to hearts and will have almost certainly at least two more clubs than hearts – one heart and three or four clubs is very common on this auction. So how is declarer going to make any tricks from dummy? Yes, by ruffing hearts. And you really don't want that. So you should be leading trumps. Indeed on auctions like this you should be leading trumps by default. You need a very, very good reason not to lead trumps and Kxx of trumps is definitely not one of them. So we can go through this one pretty quickly.

- (a) ♠Q: 5 marks, ♠3: 5 marks, ♠other: 1 mark. If I weren't going to lead a trump then I would lead a spade as this is likely to be safer than anything else. Declarer is unlikely to have more than two, but it might set up a trick.
- (b) ♥any: 1 mark. From the ♥KJ round into declarer's 5-card suit. This is a terrible lead.
- (c) ♦8: 5 marks; ♦6: 1 mark. Yes you may get a ruff, but more likely you are just finessing partner's diamond honours for declarer.
- (d) ♣5/4: 10 marks, ♣K: 1 mark. For all the reasons given above this is the right lead. Not the ♣K of course as you hope to make that later in the play!
- Pairs bonus:** ♣5/4: 5 marks. The same lead for the same reasons.

Continued overleaf

You are sitting West. Choose your lead:

Hand 7

♠ 8 7 5 3 2
♥ A 5
♦ A 9 8 2
♣ 9 8

South	West	North	East
		1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	4♠	All Pass

What would you lead in teams and in pairs?

This is a further example of when it is almost automatic to lead a trump – when you have five small trumps and particularly when the opponents are in a 4-4 fit, as here. You aim is to cut down their ruffs, so you lead a trump, and when you get in with one of your aces you lead another trump and when you get in with your next one you lead another trump! That way you minimise their ruffing tricks and will end up with the only trumps in the game. If you don't do this, you may well find yourself caught in one of the most irritating plays in bridge – watching declarer gleefully crossruff in the end game with you being repeatedly forced to under-ruff.

- (a) ♠**any: 10 mark.** For the reason given above.
- (b) ♥**A: 5 marks; ♥5: 1 mark.** This is an attempt to get a heart ruff. OK if you get one the contract is down, but frankly it is almost certainly going down then anyway, and you can always do this later.
- (c) ♦**A: 2 marks; ♦other: 1 mark.** I can see no reason at all for fishing out a diamond here.
- (d) ♠**9: 3 marks, ♠8: 1 mark.** I don't like this lead either. Declarer is almost certain to be playing on clubs themselves, so why do their work for them?
- Pairs bonus: ♠any: 5 marks.** The same lead for the same reasons.

Continued overleaf

You are sitting West. Choose your lead:

Hand 8	
♠	6 3 2
♥	K 7 6 2
♦	7 5 3
♣	6 5 4

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	Pass	4NT ¹	Pass
5♠ ²	Pass	6♠	All Pass

¹ Roman Keycard Blackwood (spades),
² Two out of five of the four aces and the ♠K, plus the ♠Q

What would you lead in teams and in pairs?

We finish with a slam deal. Those of you who read my usual column in *English Bridge* will know that I constantly bang on about the need to lead very aggressively against suit slams. The point is that people don't go around bidding slams on a wing and a prayer (or if they do you are going to beat them anyway). When the opponents bid a slam it is because they think they are going to make it. And therefore left to their own devices they will do so most of the time. Hence the need for aggression.

What do we know here? It is likely, but not certain, partner has a keycard (no try for 7), and frankly if partner doesn't your chances of beating 6♠ are almost zero. So you need another trick. From where? Your diamond holding is awful suggesting that declarer will be able to set up diamonds for discards. Which means that you have to have a trick ready to cash when partner wins their trick. So you need to think to yourself; 'What is the least I need from partner to set up a trick'. That will tell you what to lead.

- (a) ♠**any: 1 mark.** Books always used to say 'leads trumps against slams' and the books were wrong! As I keep saying it is almost never right to lead trumps against suit slams, and this is no exception. It is too passive – declarer will just draw trumps and make their contract.
- (b) ♥**2: 10 marks; ♥other: 5 marks.** What is the least you need from partner for this to be setting up a trick? The answer is the ♥Q (or ♥A!). That is the least so that is what you should lead.
- (c) ♦**any: 1 mark.** This is just as bad (in some ways even worse) that leading a trump. Just way too passive and does declarer's job for them.
- (d) ♣**any: 6 marks.** If I weren't leading a heart I would lead a club, but it needs partner to have way more to set up a trick – usually the ♣KQ, sometimes the KJ, which is more than the ♥Q. But it is a choice between hearts and clubs.
- Pairs bonus: ♥2: 5 marks.** The same lead for the same reasons.

Continued overleaf

LEADING TRUMPS – KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ❖ If a contract has been bid *to make*, it is usually a bad idea to lead trumps as it is too passive. Experts tend to lead trumps only when everything else looks worse.
- ❖ On the same theme, it is almost never right to lead a trump against a slam.
- ❖ There are however a number of occasions when a trump is not only advised, but is a standout lead. These include:
 - ◆ When the opponents are known to be sacrificing.
 - ◆ When you have doubled a low-level contract and you or partner has good trumps.
 - ◆ When you have five trumps, particularly if the opponents are known to be, or are likely to be, in a 4-4 fit.
 - ◆ When the opponents have stopped at a low level in a second suit.
- ❖ Do not lead a trump when the opponents have pre-empted and it has not been raised, whether or not the contract has been doubled. Dummy won't have ruffing values and you will be finessing partner's honours.
- ❖ Always consider the bidding and draw any inferences you can from it, both positive and negative. □

Eastbourne Summer Meeting



**Join us for the 2026 EBU Summer Meeting
6th - 9th August**

We are once again in sunny Eastbourne for:

**Swiss Pairs Championship, Swiss Teams,
Open/Mixed Pairs, Swiss Pairs Lite
and Serious Fast Pairs**

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All players have agreed to play ‘transfers’ after a 1NT opening (12-14 pts), so 2♦ is a transfer to 2♥. If the opener is short of hearts (say 4·2·4·3), can they rebid 2NT or do they have to say 2♥? Bearing in mind that 2NT scores more than 2♥.

I tried to find this via publications but have drawn a blank: if the opposition open, say, 1♦ and I do a weak 2♠ jump overcall, does my partner have to announce ‘weak’? A friend of mine at a local club suggested it is normal to announce ‘weak’. Could you please clarify.

Is it permitted to leave the final bid prominent? This might be either by leaving the relevant bidding card face up in front of declarer, or by returning the bidding card in the bidding box but putting it at an angle.

You can agree to respond to 2♦ in any way you like, so you do not have to bid 2♥ and you can bid 2NT without support.

But

- ❖ Don't do this if partner is not expecting it - your partner may have to explain 2NT to opponents.
- ❖ This will not work if partner wanted the contract to be 2♥ but was not necessarily expecting 2♥ to make. Partner's hand may not be suitable for NT; and 2NT going two or three off scores worse than 2♥ making or going one off.

According to current EBU regulations, there is no announcements of overcalls, which is why you could not find anything in the publications. But this may well change in August 2026.

Some clubs have adopted the practice of announcing the strength of jump overcalls - ‘weak’, ‘intermediate’, ‘strong - non forcing’ or similar. If this is the custom in your club, or you are instructed by the tournament director to do so, then you should follow this practice.

The EBU bidding box regulations require that all bidding cards be returned to the box, and do not allow the contract to be displayed. The laws do not allow an aid to memory - this includes showing the final contract during play.

But the laws do allow clubs to change this rule - so a club can require (or can allow) that the final contract is displayed (prominently). In a club you should follow the local custom, and check with the director if you want to make sure you are doing the right thing.

Continued overleaf

Historically when a board can't be played due to lack of time we give a 50/50 score unless one pair are particularly slow, then we give 60/40. However I've been told by one of the members that we should actually be putting it in as 'not played', as it affects the results. Which should I do?

The member is wrong. 'Not played' is not appropriate for a board where there should be a result.

Law 12C2 says that if no results can be obtained the director awards an artificial score – 60/40 or 50/50 as you describe.

The EBU regulations in the White Book are forthright on the point:

8.12.9 'Not played'

*Computer software usually has a possibility of inputting 'not played' for a table on a specific board. Some TDs or scorers use this when a table loses a board for slow play, late arrival or other similar reasons but **this is illegal**. At such a time the TD should decide whether to give AVE+, AVE or AVE– to each side as is required by Law 12C2 (a).*

CLICK
HERE FOR
MORE
INFO!

GREAT NORTHERN SWISS PAIRS

3-4 OCT

VILLAGE HOTEL, LEEDS NORTH

Join us for Swiss Pairs (Sat & Sun) or 9-High Swiss Pairs (Sat) plus a complimentary 2-course hot buffet supper on Saturday & sandwich and cake afternoon tea on Sunday



I was registered severely visually impaired in 2016 with dry macular degeneration, for which there is no treatment. Since then, my eyesight has steadily deteriorated but my bridge has steadily improved. How did this happen?

Essentially it has been down to technology and help from other players. As the technology is expensive, your first step is to find out from your GP if you qualify to be registered as *severely visually impaired*. This gives you status when seeking help, and an extra £800 from reduced tax at the 40% rate, exemption from VAT on items for the blind and many other benefits.

When I began having difficulty seeing the cards, I bought battery powered lamps from the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) which were cumbersome to carry around and so necessitated a N/S seat when playing duplicate bridge. Barry Capal, then chief executive of the EBU and a local club player, told me that the president of the United States Bridge Federation used newly

invented wearable magnifiers. This was a real breakthrough which led me to purchase my own. They provide enormous magnification and can cope with varying levels of illumination so you don't need lamps. You get an excellent view of your own hand and you may be able to see all of the other cards on the table as well, depending on how far your sight has deteriorated. These and similar devices can be obtained from VisionAid Technologies



(www.visionaid.co.uk), who will send one of their helpful team to your home to demonstrate their products free of charge. Like most companies in this field, they treat people with poor eyesight as patients rather than customers and are keen to help you find the best solution for your problem.

The main drawback to wearable magnifiers is their cost – anywhere from £890 to £5000. And you may also need to buy a small portable power pack, for up to £30, to keep the device charged for bridge sessions lasting three hours. But you can use them for many other activities including watching TV and your computer screen – so facilitating online bridge as well. You can watch an impartial review of wearable magnifiers by viewing a YouTube channel called *The Blind Life*. And do search online for the RNIB's guide to wearable technology for the visually impaired.

However, my continued presence at the bridge table also owes much to the help and support provided by the other players at the

Continued overleaf

two clubs where I play in Hertfordshire – Watford and Bushey BC and Watford Cassiobury BC. Despite the excellent magnifier, I have difficulty sorting my cards into suits. So, I make use of the EBU rule which allows the visually impaired to ask the player who has the cards ahead of them to sort the hand into suits and rank order within the suit, after they've played the hand, and if there is time. The rules permit you to ask, but you cannot insist. In my experience, almost everyone is more than willing to sort my cards for me.

However, there are some complex issues over card sorting. First, you need to be sure who has the cards ahead of you which is easy if you are sitting N/S. If you are sitting South at Table 5, then the player who is South at Table 6 should be asked to sort your cards. But if you are sitting E/W, which is not impossible with the wearable magnifiers, then you need to ask the E/W pair **two** tables above you. For example, if you start the session as West on Table 5,

then it will be the West who starts at Table 7 who needs to sort the cards for you.

Obviously, you have to sort your own cards for the first round, which has led to a few revokes over the years, or more likely, heart attacks caused by sitting there with what appears to be the ♠A in my hand. But then another player leads the ♠A to the first trick. After you have recovered from the shock, you realise that the card in your hand is actually the ace of clubs!

There are further complications in clubs with sophisticated movements such as share and relay and arrow switching. Directors at WBBC have been extremely helpful to me and will often try to ensure that there is no share or relay near my table – so it helps if you always sit at the same table. If you have a relay between your table and the one above, then you may have to sort your own cards for two rounds.

Arrow-switching may also be a problem if your card sorter is not aware that the next round will be switched so you can end up

with unsorted cards as E/W while your opposing South has had their hands beautifully arranged. Again, directors have been very helpful about this, sometimes arranging for someone who has played the hand to sort the cards specially for me.

As my sight has steadily deteriorated, despite my excellent magnifiers, I can no longer see either the cards on the table nor the bidding cards. The solution is to ask your partner to call out the bidding and playing cards as each is laid down. Alternatively, you can ask dummy to call out the cards. But beware the eight of any suit as you often hear a voice saying 'eight' only to discover, after you've played your king on it, that the card was actually an ace. So make sure your hearing aids are in good order!

Playing online presents different challenges, with no one available to read out the cards. But my WBBC face-to-face partner John Lambe, has come to the rescue by writing an extension for the Google

Continued overleaf

Chrome browser which provides additional functionality when I use the BridgeBase Online (BBO) website. The extension is free and can be downloaded from the Google Chrome Web Store; just search for 'BBO Visual Assist' using the Chrome browser. If you need help to download the extension just search for 'how to download a Chrome extension'.

The BBO Visual Assist extension not only calls out the cards and the bids but also analyses the hand, giving you the point count, the shape of the hand and even the losing trick count (LTC) and does the same with dummy. I am not sure whether helping you with the LTC is entirely legal but I don't intend to find out.

BBO Visual Assist has enormously extended my online bridge playing life but you need to be aware of one or two complications. For example, you need to turn off your screen reader, so important for the visually impaired, as otherwise the screen reader competes with BBO's own reader. And when using BBO Visual Assist,

always keep your cursor on the virtual green background when not in use as BBO Visual Assist won't read out your hand otherwise.

You can use your wearable magnifiers when studying your club's website afterwards. Unfortunately I can no longer see the cards on the website even with wearable magnifiers. Instead, I use the magnifier on my specially modified smartphone which lets me read the cards reasonably clearly. It is a Samsung mobile

phone, modified with software for the visually impaired made by Synaptic. You can obtain these from VislonAid Technologies. They are also indispensable for many other activities.

Playing at home is more difficult because there is no one to sort your cards. But you still have your wearable magnifiers and help from other players and you can also choose your own specially designed cards. Braille cards may be suitable for those of us who can read Braille, or you can get specially produced cards from the RNIB, but personally I don't find their present designs very helpful. You may prefer to search online for 'playing cards for the visually impaired'.

I hope that these ideas will help visually impaired players to continue, as I have, long after diagnosis. I also hope that it helps directors and members of clubs support their visually impaired members.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with me at dreidd@aol.com if you have suggestions or need any further advice. □



Journey of a Bridge Player

How long have you been playing bridge? Some people play regularly, enjoying the social element and finding their level. Others go to classes for years, enjoying the lessons but hardly putting the concepts into practice. Others are ambitious. Bridge takes a hold in their imagination and they see an English Cap beckoning.

If you want to really improve at bridge you have to play against good players, and you have to ask for advice. It's rude to tell people where they went wrong at the table, so if you would like to know if you could have bid or played better, you may need to ask.

Here's a suggestion of the competitions you might join as you climb the master point ranks. These tournaments give you the chance to meet better players and learn from them.

Did they deceive you – could you copy that? Did they catch your singleton king – how did they know? Did they put you on lead at the end, so you had to give a trick away ... mmm ... something to think about?

There are other things to do as you get your feet under the table at a club. Please volunteer to join the committee – it's not just for the best players and should consist of all levels. The views of the newest members are often under-represented on the club committees. You might want to introduce mentoring evenings, or a social event or a 'date night' to find potential new partners.

There's lots you can do for the club and for your own bridge satisfaction. Here's what you might feel ready for.

MASTER POINT RANKS

Local	Why not try out a café bridge. You will enjoy these wonderful relaxed occasions where you stroll between watering holes playing a couple of hands at each and meeting lots of people. It's sociable and it's not a bit scary. You'd also be very welcome at charity bridge events and might consider a bridge holiday.
Club	You've had a few good results to get this far – congratulations! You can stop feeling nervous. Enjoy yourself and familiarise yourself with the county website to see what's happening locally, and check out My EBU to see your sessions and how you are doing on the National Grading Scheme (NGS). There's lots to see.
Area	OK - You are certainly ready for some county events. Check out the website to see what's going on – counties typically run various pairs and teams events, some of which are 'Swiss'. This means that after the first round you will play people with a similar score to yours. Start looking for a partner who might want to accompany you, and perhaps some team mates. Most counties run a County League with several divisions – form a team – it's great fun. There are also handicapped events where your NGS grade is taken into account.
District County	You could now look at joining a Green-Pointed event. These are run F2F by counties or there are OODGP (Online One-Day Green Point) events run by the EBU. Green points are usually awarded at a higher rate than the points you earn in a club session, as the competition is generally more serious, and they will be needed for some of the ranks you might be aiming for in the future. You will be a regular club player by now, and might consider joining the club committee.
Master	Congratulations - this is known as a Landmark Promotion. It's a big one. You are ready to join anything. Make the most of what's on offer. As an added incentive your EBU account is credited with a £25 voucher to use against entry for any EBU-organised event. You'll find it on My EBU.

In another life, I was asked what the best part of my job was. The people, I instantly replied. And the worst part? The people! Same with bridge, you'll love some, not others. But the challenge of overcoming opposition, making that play you read about last week, finally understanding and carrying out an end play. It's as good as *** and if you are as old as me, it's better!

You now play regularly in your club and have seen a county event advertised on the noticeboard. Should I, shouldn't I? Don't vacillate, enter it! And remember to look on your county website (and the EBU website if you want to try something more adventurous). Competitions bring a wealth of new challenges. At county level and above you'll play against some experienced and better players. If your expert oppo looks friendly, and more than a few are, grab the opportunity with

both hands – ask them if you could or should have done something better or differently. Yes, you might have to be a bit bold to ask but honestly it is well worth it. As the saying goes ... think of them in fewer clothes than they are wearing, and you will realise that they, too, are part of the same human race.

The more people that you play against, the more the experience will bring your game on – the more this happens the more enjoyment you will have and, as a side issue, the more friendships you will make. You will have your successes and your failures, but the thing with failure in bridge is that it is there to help you to learn from the pitfalls into which you may have fallen. It's all a learning curve, a massive challenge, and don't let anyone tell you bridge is only a game. It's a wonderful way of life.

A vertical poster for the Northern Midweek Congress. The top section has a light blue background with the text 'NORTHERN MIDWEEK CONGRESS' in large, bold, dark blue capital letters. Below this is a pink banner with the text 'A MID-WEEK BRIDGE COMPETITION IN YORKSHIRE!' in white capital letters. The next section has a light blue background with the text 'CAIRN HOTEL HARROGATE' in bold, dark blue capital letters, followed by '25TH - 27TH AUGUST' in the same style. To the right of this text is a small logo for 'THE ENGLISH BRIDGE UNION' featuring a green shield with a white cross and four red hearts. Below the dates, it says 'THIS EVENT IS BEING RUN BY OLIVER COWAN ON BEHALF OF THE EBU' in smaller, dark blue capital letters. The bottom section has a pink banner with the text 'FOR MORE INFO VISIT EBU.CO.UK/COMPETITIONS/NORTHERN-MIDWEEK-CONGRESS' in white capital letters. The entire poster is framed by a decorative border of pink and yellow flowers at the top and bottom.

**NORTHERN
MIDWEEK
CONGRESS**

**A MID-WEEK BRIDGE COMPETITION
IN YORKSHIRE!**

**CAIRN HOTEL
HARROGATE**

25TH - 27TH AUGUST

THIS EVENT IS BEING RUN BY OLIVER COWAN
ON BEHALF OF THE EBU

FOR MORE INFO VISIT
EBU.CO.UK/COMPETITIONS/NORTHERN-MIDWEEK-CONGRESS

PLAYING IN YOUR FIRST CONGRESS

Most of us get accustomed to playing at our weekly club duplicate sessions, and county or national events can seem a big and sometimes daunting step up. But playing 50 odd boards against a wider range of opponents will give you confidence over time and make your bridge and your partnership understanding better. I hope it will also give you pleasure.

ENTERING

When you decide to enter, do so as soon as you can; it makes it easier for the organisers to gauge numbers. Entry is normally online, and you can often see who else has entered. You may have the option of lunch too, but beware the effect of a good lunch on your bridge!

BEFORE THE DAY

You will need to review your system card, and it is worth spending time with your

partner discussing the details. Do Stayman and transfers apply over a 1NT overcall? What about over a double of their 1NT? What are the strength limitations in each case? If you don't often play together, try and organise a couple of practice sessions too.

ON THE DAY

Leave enough time to arrive at least 15 minutes early. Parking may be a problem. I once had to run about a mile and arrived hot and sweating just in time to lose our first round 20-0, admittedly against the eventual winners. The lesson I learnt was to keep the organisers' telephone number to hand so you can call if you're going to be late, but best of all, arrive early and relaxed.

WHAT TO EXPECT

In a Swiss competition there will usually be six or seven matches of seven or so boards each. Each will last about 55 minutes. If it is a teams competition, you

will score from 0 to 20 Victory Points (VPs) depending how many IMPs you beat or lose to your opponent by. If it is pairs, your score will depend how you do compared to other N/Ss or E/Ws, but it will likewise be converted to VPs to score the match.

When you arrive you will draw for the first round and be allocated a table and direction. The Tournament Director will let you know when the event is ready to begin. They will usually tell you what the schedule is, what prizes are on offer, and when there are breaks. They will remind you about bridge etiquette and (if it is teams) tell the EW pairs where to go for the first round. The TD tells you when to start, much like a club evening. You may be a bit nervous the first few hands, but that will pass as you play your normal bridge game.

DURING PLAY

Playing nearly 50 boards is hard work. Focus is important, but you also need to

Continued overleaf

pace yourself. I've won more VPs than I've deserved by staying alert in the last two matches. Conversely tiredness in the last one has more than once spoiled our chances of glory. That means not investing energy in discussing the hands you have just played, unless it is a simple clarification. You can discuss the rest later. And I find that it can be helpful to get outside for some fresh air and a change of scenery during the break.

You may find that you end a match earlier or later than other tables. If earlier you can take a quick break. If you are the last table to finish, there may be quite a lot of noise around you. But do not be afraid to take the time you need to play or defend a difficult hand. The directors will understand.

If in the play you need to call the director, it is best to put a hand up and say clearly '*Director Please.*' If the reason is not obvious, such as a revoke, it is polite to explain to your opposition briefly why.

When the director comes, as you always would, explain clearly what has happened and whether you want a ruling or guidance. Abide by the director's decision. If you think they have got it wrong, you can make a challenge at the end of the round/match. But they usually haven't.

If the director's decision goes against you, the zen-like calm in which you normally play bridge may be disturbed. I've also known the opposition get upset by our decision to call the director. In these circumstances, I suggest a couple of deep breaths and do your best to concentrate back on the bridge.

AFTER THE FIRST MATCH

A few minutes after all the tables have finished the first match, the computer programme will allocate your next opponent and tell you via the Bridgemate or tablet. In Swiss competitions, at each round you will be matched against a

competitor with a similar score. So after that first match you may head up towards Table 1 with 20 VPs in your pocket, or alternatively in the direction of the bottom table with none.

Whatever has happened, do not despair. I have found myself on bottom table after one match to see the top pair in the county walking towards us. After the second, we went off to lunch with 1 VP out of 40. Things went better in the afternoon, but the point is that even if you are having a horror show, as the day goes on you will find yourself with easier opposition. Conversely, if everything is going right, you will be having a tougher time against the top pairs.

ETIQUETTE

At each table, say hello to your opponents when you or they arrive. It is customary to give a short description of your system (such as Acol, weak no trump, weak 2 majors). I like to check their discards and signals so I don't have to ask them in play.

Continued overleaf

And at the end of the match, as you move on, thank them and wish them luck the rest of the day.

The vast majority of competitors are, like you, lovely people who just want to enjoy themselves over a good game of bridge. But if your opponents are arguing (it happens) or unwelcoming (rare, but not unknown), your options are to zone them out or to call the director. The first will almost always be preferable.

Do not forget that these are, however, competitive events, and less leeway is given than at a club evening. On arrival at a table, give your system card to the opposition for the duration of the match. They can then, when it is their turn to call, refer to it if you alert a bid. Always use the stop card if you jump in the bidding and wait the regulation ten seconds. If you want to claim, give a clear indication of how you will play the remaining cards. Occasionally you will find

an opponent who tries to take advantage of a lapse: 'you didn't designate which spade, so play the lowest'. It might be a good idea to call the TD in situations like this – after all TDs are there to help you, and know how to deal with irregularities.



THE LAST ROUND

As the last round approaches, you may find yourself vying for glory, or near the bottom with little to play for. If things have gone well, it is important to focus on your bridge during the last seven boards and not think about the result. If you've had a bad

day, do not give up: you can regain some pleasure from a hand well bid or played or defended. You may find yourself up against a good pair who decide to swing the bat in the aim of getting among the prizes. If you are lucky, you may find you benefit from that if, as sometimes happens, it doesn't work out for them.

WHEN IT IS OVER

You may finish before other tables. There is nothing to stop you leaving then, but organisers appreciate it if you stay behind for the prize giving. I like to go over the hands with my partner to see what we could have done better, but I prefer to wait for a night's sleep before doing that. Most importantly, I hope you will be able to look back on the day and say to yourself that you got something good out of it, whether pleasure, satisfaction, improved partnership understanding, or, dare I say it, even a prize. □

Give Yourself a Chance in the National Handicap Pairs

Hats off to a national event where any pair can win, or do well. It's certainly a competition to consider entering.

The principle of handicapping is well established in many sports such as golf and horse racing and in games such as chess. The stronger contender has to accept a disadvantage such as more weight to carry or less time, or fewer shots. The desired outcome of the handicapping process is to make a competition meaningful. The perfect outcome would result in everybody finishing equal first ... or last. Of course, it doesn't work out like that as both horses and bridge players can play better or less well than expected on the day but handicaps give everybody an equal chance of their day in the spotlight.

The National Grading System in bridge is perfectly suited for handicap competitions. A lower-rated pair can compete on equal terms with a couple of stars. It has been used in many clubs either regularly or as an annual event.

In the National Handicapped Pairs Championship your rating (handicap) will be based on the average NGS of you and

your partner. To do well you simply have to play better than expected based on your NGS – anyone can win this event just by having a sufficiently good day!

The event will be played both F2F at clubs around the country, and online, with the results from heats combined and match-pointed across the field, like a

simultaneous pairs event. There will be blue points at national level to the top third of the field and prizes too based on the overall handicapped ranking list. Perhaps more important than points and prizes is the joy and delight for lower-ranked players who finish near the top, and that could be you! 



National Handicap Pairs Championship

6th September 2026, various locations

Play in this special Pairs event which gives everyone a chance of doing well. The results are based on your score combined with your NGS grade, giving you a fair chance against all players, however good they are.

If your club is not already running a heat,
why not ask them to sign up

More details at:
www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/handicap-pairs



Games for Progressing Players

UPCOMING EBU EVENTS

SUMMER
2026



JUL
11

REALBRIDGE
ONLINE ONE DAY GP SWISS PAIRS

JUL
16-19

SCARBOROUGH
SCARBOROUGH SUMMER CONGRESS

JUL
20-23

VARIOUS CLUBS
BRITISH SUMMER SIM PAIRS

AUG
1

REALBRIDGE
ONLINE ONE DAY GP SWISS PAIRS

AUG
6-9

EASTBOURNE
EASTBOURNE SUMMER MEETING

AUG
25-27

HARROGATE
NORTHERN MIDWEEK CONGRESS

SEP
6

VARIOUS CLUBS
NATIONAL HANDICAP PAIRS CHAMPS

SEP
7-10

VARIOUS CLUBS
EBED AUTUMN SIM PAIRS

Did you know that there are lots of games especially for progressing players (Up to 7 and 9 on the NGS*) – see left – and look out for other games organised by teachers, clubs and your county. It's a great way to take a step into duplicate bridge – nothing improves play as much as playing! Members who need to buy BB\$ to play in paid games should buy them through the BBO website and not through the app, which often adds on a significant surcharge. Here are testimonials from people who have taken part in games specifically for less-experienced players:

Many thanks for your input regarding Saturday's tournament - really enjoyed it - looking forward to the next.

I really enjoyed the event and thank you for sorting us out with another pair.

I was very nervous at the start but thoroughly enjoyed it. Thank you.

Hadn't played more than 16 boards before, didn't realise you could play as many as 24!

Thank you for organising the event, really enjoyed the afternoon even if we didn't do very well. Let me know when the next one is.

Excellent experience, thank you for inviting us to play.

Although daunting, the Midlands teams tournaments 9-high and 6-high this year have been excellent experience, getting us newbies ready to get back to club play asap and face the experienced players with more confidence.

The ability to look back at the hands played in the EBU daily U9s tournaments has really helped my play. I can talk though our games with partner and apply the lessons learned to our conventions and play. So much more helpful than playing in friendlies on BBO or club games against really experienced players where we can't easily understand their bidding.

Ref 9-high and 6-high events: These events are great fun; you could describe it as speed dating meets online bridge (not that I've tried the former!). Seriously though, in the two events in which I participated, I've met players, in their homes, from as far afield as Cornwall to Derbyshire, and Northampton to the Welsh borders. It's terrific to discover there are so many people around the country enjoying the game as much as me! □

** for details of the NGS see page 81*

A new club on the block for lucky Londoners

If you'd like to learn bridge from scratch, or are looking for a friendly club where you can enjoy the game, Finesse Bridge Club in North London opened its doors at the end of June and offers a warm welcome to players of all levels.

Based at St Luke's Church in Islington on Hillmarton Road, Finesse Bridge Club was created to provide enjoyable, competitive bridge in a relaxed and sociable environment. Give it a go – you'll find a friendly atmosphere and a community that loves the game.

The club is affiliated with the EBU and as such will strike a balance between competitive bridge and a welcoming atmosphere. Newer players are encouraged to give duplicate a try, while experienced players can enjoy a well-run game in comfortable surroundings.

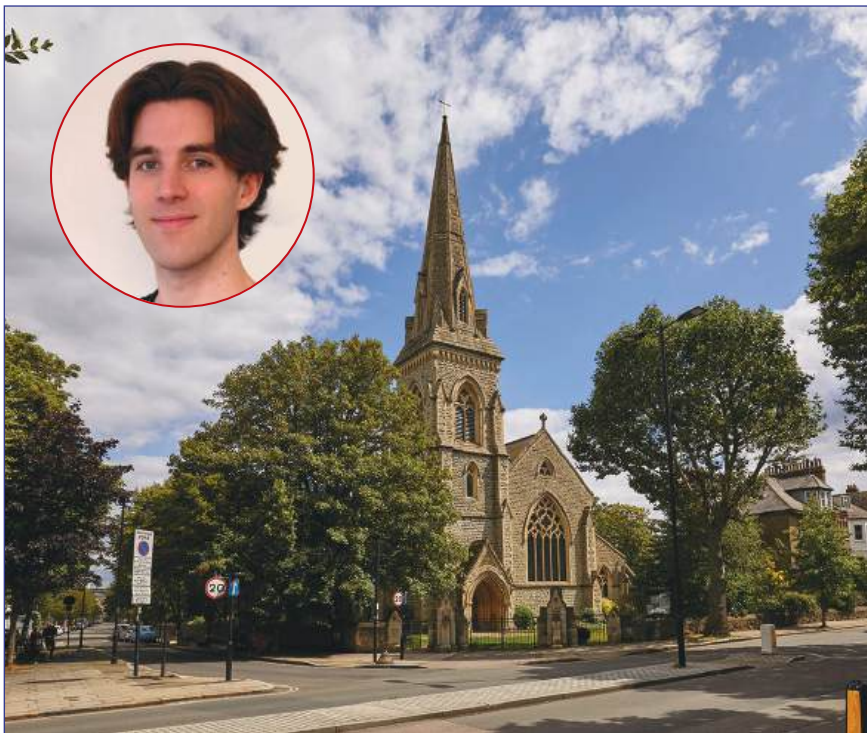
Players can bring their own drinks (including alcohol), with tea, coffee, and biscuits provided. There is ample free parking in the surrounding area.

A SPACE FOR COMPLETE BEGINNERS

Know someone who wants to learn bridge? Alongside **regular duplicate bridge sessions on Wednesday evenings at 7.30**, the club is **running beginner courses** designed specifically for those taking their first steps into bridge. Lessons focus on learning by playing, with plenty of opportunities to ask questions and build confidence at the table. No previous experience is required, and players are welcome to come on their own.

Bridge remains one of the most rewarding games in the world, combining logic, partnership and lifelong learning. Whether you're curious about learning the game for the first time or searching for a new club to call home, Finesse Bridge Club welcomes you with a free first session. For details of duplicate sessions and beginner courses visit:

www.finessebridgeclub.co.uk or email jonathan@finessebridgeclub.co.uk



EBED free Next Generation Game (formerly the Generation Game)

For over two years EBED has run a free monthly event on Realbridge called the **Generation Game**, where players of various age groups come together one Sunday a month in a friendly bridge practice game.

As our efforts to grow bridge in schools and universities bear fruit, EBED would like to expand playing and development opportunities for youth players, particularly



those who are new(er) to the game. Thus we are introducing the **EBED Sunday Next Generation Pairs**: a free gentle duplicate every second Sunday of the month, online on Realbridge. Players will play a 12-board

gentle duplicate from 6.30pm to 8.00pm. It is aimed at those who are developing their skills and confidence at the table, and is a great way to familiarise oneself with the experience of duplicate bridge.

All types of partnerships are welcome, with only one requirement: that one of the pair must be U26. We have had 9- and 10-year-olds who met at our bridge camps playing together, young people playing with siblings/parents/grandparents, university players from Durham and Oxford new to bridge, and more. So long as you know how the cards go round, why not come and give this a go? With an average of nine to 11 tables over the past few months, we would love to see more of you join us.

The Next Generation Pairs

A relaxed 12 board duplicate suitable for beginners on RealBridge

Who has played?

- Two Primary school children who have just learnt a little bidding.
- Young people with their grandparents.
- University pairs where one is less experienced.

The only rule: one player must be under the age of 26.

The second Sunday of every month 6:30pm - 8pm.
Partners always found.
The link is on <https://www.bridgewebs.com/bridge4schools/>
No need to pre-book.

The logo for Real Bridge Education & Development features a green diamond shape with the text 'Real Bridge' in white and 'Education & Development' in green. Below the logo are several playing cards, including the Ace of Spades, Ace of Clubs, Ace of Hearts, and Ace of Diamonds.

The RealBridge software allows all participants to interact naturally with others at our table using live audio and video, and the player link for each session enables participants to revisit the scores and compare them against other tables – plus you can drill down into each hand and review the full order of play if you wish.

You can find more information and joining details on this link:

<https://www.ebu.co.uk/education/ebed-sunday-next-generation-pairs>

Celebrate your Bridge Achievements with Master Points

The Master Point Scheme is run by the EBU. Master Points are awarded for finishing in the top third in competitions run by the EBU, counties and affiliated clubs, or external competitions licensed by the EBU. The points are awarded on a scale according to the size and status of the competition.

Master Points are credited to your account automatically – you do not need to do anything.

LOCAL, BLUE, GREEN & GOLD POINTS

Local points (black points) are typically awarded in club competitions. Blue points are awarded in some club and County competitions, some minor national competitions, and in the EBU's Simultaneous Pairs. Green points are awarded in most national events, and select county competitions. Gold Points are not part of the main Master Point scheme. They are a separate scheme, used to recognise the current 'form' of elite players.

RANKINGS

There are over a dozen different rankings which you can achieve. The early ranks are reached by most players. The top

ranks are only achieved by a small percentage of members in their lifetime. [A list of rankings can be seen here.](#)

To reach some rankings you must earn green points, rewarding those who take part in higher level competitions. Your ranking is calculated automatically, and can be seen on My EBU.

PROMOTIONS

All promotions (other than for those members who have chosen not to be listed) are on our website, with a new list posted every month. [Click here for a link to Promotions.](#)

Promotion to one of four landmark ranks is recognised by a listing in *English Bridge* magazine, and the receipt of a certificate. Those achieving the rank of Master receive free entry to the annual Masters Pairs event. [Click for a link to the Masters Pairs.](#)

ANNUAL COMPETITION

There is an annual Master Point competition, with prizes for winners in various categories and covering all ranks. For details see www.ebu.co.uk/masterpoint-reports.

If you do not wish to appear on any promotions list, you can change the setting on your preferences in My EBU. ☐

The National Grading Scheme (NGS) measures an individual's current level of performance when playing duplicate bridge.

Unlike the Master Point Scheme (*see p64*), which reflects lifetime achievement, the NGS reflects an individual's **current** standard of play. It can go down as well as up.

Your grade is calculated automatically based on the results submitted to the EBU, and is updated each time you play. In simple terms, it looks at how well you performed compared to what would be expected against the opposition you are facing, and given the standard of your partner.

Grades are divided into 13 bands, ranging from a 'Two' through to an 'Ace'. The Ace category is then subdivided, with very few players reaching an Ace of Spades.

When you first start playing in duplicate tournaments you won't have a grade as you have not played enough hands for one to be calculated. Your grade is not published, and your partner's NGS will not be affected, until you have played 150 boards. Once you have played 150 boards, but less than 1,000, your grade is considered to be 'evolving'. Once you have played 1,000 boards

you have a 'mature' grade. Your grade (between 0 & 100) represents the percentage score it is estimated you could expect on average if you hypothetically played with a player of the same grade, against a field of average (50) strength.

You can see your grade, how recent results have affected it, and the grade of your different partners and partnerships, on My EBU. Grades are available publicly at www.ebu.co.uk/ngs. If you wish to hide your grade so it is not made public, you can change the setting on your preferences in My EBU – your grade will still be calculated, and you will still be able to see it in My EBU.

WHAT AFFECTS YOUR GRADE?

Your grade is affected only by how well you and your partner perform relative to expectations. It doesn't matter if you play with an international or a beginner, and in a club game or a national competition. All that matters is whether you got a better score than the scheme thinks you should have done, given who you were playing with and who you were playing against.

There are some myths that the NGS doesn't work in certain scenarios. Many were dispelled in a historical article at: www.ebu.co.uk/documents/miscellaneous/ngs/clark-article.pdf and we have recent research that confirms this. 

Best Behaviour at Bridge



- ♥ Greet others in a friendly manner prior to the start of play on each round.
- ♥ Be a good 'host' or 'guest' at the table.
- ♥ Make your system card readily available to your opponents and fill it out completely (required).
- ♥ Make bridge enjoyable for yourself, partner and opponents.
- ♥ Give credit when opponents make a good bid or play.
- ♥ Be friendly to novices & help them to enjoy the game.
- ♥ Take care of your personal grooming.
- ♥ Ensure that your mobile phone is turned off.
- ♥ Enjoy the company as well as the game.

Remember that it is rude to criticise your partner or opponents in public, to be less than polite at the table, to gloat over good results or object to a call for the tournament director or to impolitely argue about a director's ruling, or generally to make any personal and disparaging remark.

The small print:

As in all games that are governed by rules and regulations, bad behaviour will be penalised

If a player at the table behaves in an unacceptable manner, the director should be called immediately. Annoying behaviour, embarrassing remarks, or any other conduct which might interfere with the enjoyment of the game is specifically prohibited by Law 74A. Law 91A gives the director the authority to assess disciplinary penalties. This can include immediate disciplinary board penalties and may lead to disqualification from the current event. In addition any violation may result in a disciplinary hearing where a player's future participation in tournaments will be considered.

Please call the Director if you think you may have been affected by bad behaviour.

You will be helping others as well as yourselves.

Every member of an EBU club is automatically a member of the EBU – which includes access to a personal web portal called My EBU. This has been developed and improved over many years, and enables members to view and analyse their results, see their master point progress, and book events of every kind, from social bridge to top congresses.

LOGGING ON

The first step with My EBU is to log on. To do that, head for the EBU home page and click or tap the red link called My EBU. On a smartphone, there is no red link but there is a Menu you can tap, with My EBU the top link.

That will get you to the log in screen. Here, you need to know your EBU number and your password. Your club secretary or scorer can tell you your number, if you are not sure. If you have forgotten your password, or never had one, follow the link for that and enter your

number in our password reset page. This depends on the EBU knowing your email address. If nothing seems to work, call us on 01296 317200 and we will sort it out!

YOUR SESSIONS

The first page you will see in My EBU is a list of all the sessions you have played this year. There is a lot of information here and it can be confusing. It starts with the date, which is easy enough, and then the

SID (Session ID) which you can safely ignore! Then comes the club where the session was played, your partner, and the score, normally a percentage but sometimes a plus or minus figure showing the IMPs (International Match Points) for a teams match. Next it shows the master point award, and after that three figures relating to the NGS (National Grading Scheme).

Continued overleaf



What is the NGS? This is a grade which is an approximation of your current bridge performance relative to everyone else! If it is 50% you are exactly in the middle, though a low NGS is nothing to worry about; what really counts is enjoying the game. It is always nice to improve though, and the three figures shown for every NGS-graded session tell you how you did. The first is the SOpp – Standard of Opposition – which tells you how strong or weak the session was. Again it is a percentage; above 50% means the players were above average overall. Any player will expect to score less well in a strong field.

Then comes the Par. This is how you did considering your own grade before the session alongside the SOpp. If it is positive and green, you did well; if it is red and negative, better luck next time! Finally, the NGS column shows your grade following the session.

You can also sneak a look at how everyone else in the session did. Click the link in the Club column to see all the scores and NGS results. It is quite fun to sort by the NGS column; then you see who really did well, considering their normal result, as opposed

to simply seeing the usual suspects towards the top.

The NGS tab gives you another view of your grade performance, with a pretty chart and a list of your partnerships. The NGS gurus tell us that the partnership grades are more accurate than individual grades, a point to ponder!

MASTER POINTS

Unlike the NGS grade, your master points can only go up with the exception of Gold points! Click or tap the Masterpoints tab at the top of the My EBU screen to see your current totals and rank. You can also click to view your Personal Masterpoint Report which shows how you ranked in the last year compared to others in your club, county and nationally.

Utilities menu: here you can find entries for booking events and courses as well as other features. Using Book Events, you can secure your place in any current EBU event – though be careful, as some events have specific entry requirements. You can find out more about the competitive events here www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/events-summary

Magazine menu: here you can find recent issues of the *English Bridge* and *Discovery* magazines, as well as a link to the web library of older issues.

Account: This menu has several options including My Details, a page where you can set your preferences and information for various things. Some to note:

Date of birth: Please fill this in if not already done! It helps us in planning and we will not divulge your birthday to anyone!

Magazine/Diary preferences: We only send the diary to those who want one, to save cost and postage. Tell us here if you want it. You will receive the magazine unless you opt out – in which case you can still read it online. Two players in one household receive one copy of the paper magazine unless they request for more copies to a single household.

Anonymous, Public Masterpoints and NGS Preference: These settings control whether other people can see your grade and points record. Some feel they enjoy bridge more without thinking about their grades, so if that is you, you might want to hide them out of the way! ☐

DID YOU KNOW you can use your club's website to analyse hands you have played?

Many clubs use BridgeWebs to host their website. The results are uploaded to the site and hand records and analysis are usually available. If it was an online game you may even be able to see the bidding and play on each board.

Bridge can throw up some intriguing results! A hand I placed recently had N/S playing in 3NT and making 10 tricks at one table, while at another E/W played in 2NT and made 6 tricks – getting an outright top! How was it that the two sides made such a divergent number of tricks, both in no trumps?

If the game was played online, BridgeWebs, or strictly the Bridge Solver Online (BSOL), can tell you. Head to your club's BridgeWebs site and find the session. Click on a pair or player in the ranking. You will see on the right that you can select any board by clicking on its number, and below the board, the results for all the pairs that played the board.

Now, how was it played? The method depends on whether you use the Classic or 2022 version of the results page – this is an

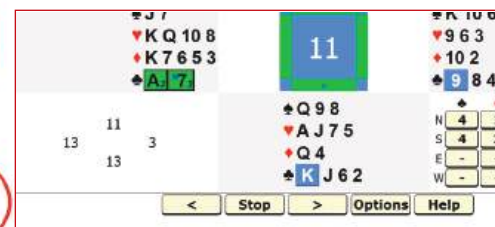
option towards the top of the page. Here is how to replay it: In the Classic edition, click the Play button by the result you want to replay.



Board No 11 None Vul Dealer South										
NS	EW	Bid	By	Ld	Tks	+Sc	-Sc	+	-	Play
4	1	2NT	S	♦5	8	120		2	4	Play
5	3	2NT	S	♦5	10	180		4	2	Play
6	8	3NT	S	♦5	10	430		6	0	Play
7	2	2NT	W	♣3	6	100		0	6	Play

This will open the hand viewer. You may be prompted to choose which hand viewer to use. If so, I suggest you select BSOL (Bridge Solver Online), created by John and Miriam Goacher for the bridge community. The board will open showing the bidding at that table. What is a bit less obvious is that you now need to click the highlighted box in the 'Possible contracts' grid for the suit and player for that board. If you click on the matching box, you will get arrow buttons that let you step through the board card by card as it was played, complete with an analysis showing how many tricks can be made by the pair about to play, according to which card is chosen and assuming perfect play from both sides.

In the example below, West will only make three tricks against best defence, in the hopeless contract of 2NT, indicated by the small number 3 in the two possible cards that can be played to the opening trick.



The forward and back buttons below the hands enable you to step through every card played.

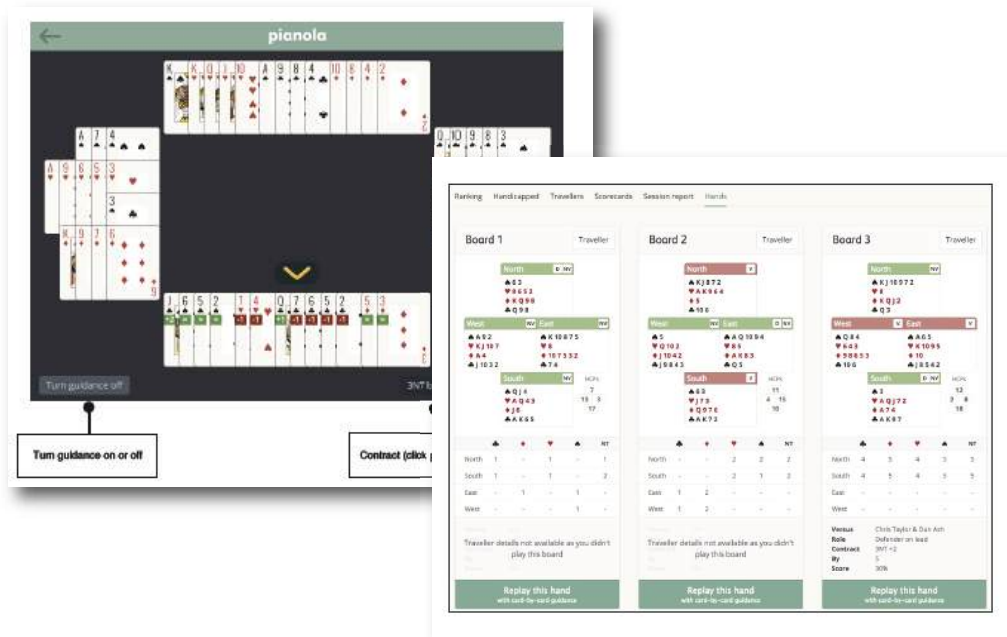
If you are using the 2022 view, it is similar but slightly different. It is all the same up to the point when you select the board number. Then, click 'Replay' by the result you want to play through. The Bridge Solver Online now appears below the results, not in a popup window, so you might need to scroll down to see it. After that it is the same: click the highlighted box in the grid of possible declarers and suits, and you will be able to step through the hand card by card.

If you cannot see the bidding and play at all, it might be because the session was not online, or the scorer did not upload the

results with all the information. If you cannot see the cards, it might be that the session was dealt manually, or that the scorer did not upload the deal file to BridgeWebs.

There is a lot more to see on BridgeWebs, including competitions that the club may have set up, and sometimes features like 'find a partner'. The play analysis though is particularly fascinating and a great way to explore how the best (or luckiest) players got their good results.

Pianola is another popular platform for hosting clubs' websites, and has many similar features. RealBridge games too are often replayable on the RealBridge site, with the options to change the play half-way through the game to see how it might affect the result. It's really worth giving some time to exploring all the available options. Most of it is pretty intuitive, so get going and discover whether the slam you bid and made was brilliant or lucky, and the contract you failed to make was bad luck, bad play or bad bidding! Check what the better players did - how they bid and played it. There's always so much to learn, but beware - 'double dummy analysis' is a 'could have' position, not a 'should have' position. *See article on next page.* 



Clubs using Pianola also benefit from a wealth of information and replay options (images above). There's a Pianola guide at <https://tinyurl.com/2307Pianologuide>

Bridge results software has become very good at showing what is called *double dummy analysis* of any board and often, any position. It is frequently fascinating and may tell you, for example, that declarer can make the contract by leading the ♠8 at trick three, but can go down if the ♦3 is led. Sometimes working out why is quite a puzzle!

In a nutshell, double dummy analysis is a mathematical solution to the maximum number of tricks that can be made given optimum play by both pairs, and full knowledge of all the hands. It is called double dummy because if a player could see their own hand and two dummy hands, then the cards in the fourth hand would also be known by elimination.

Double dummy analysis has been around for many years, and is now available through free and open source software.

However, US bridge player Matthew Kidd, who wrote an early double dummy analysis program for the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL), warned that ‘double dummy results must be taken with a healthy dose of skepticism,’ as they may depend on play that is against the odds, such as dropping a singleton king with the ace. ‘Many new players look at the double dummy results and feel they have done something wrong if they do not match the computer generated result. This is a serious misconception’, the article observed. See <https://lajollabridge.com/Software/ACBLmerge/ACBLmergeReport.htm>

The conclusion? Double dummy analysis is very useful and studying it can improve our play – but it is incapable of telling us the best single dummy play and not at all suitable for berating either yourself or your partner for not bidding game or choosing a different line of play! □

**DAYLONG
ROBOT
GAMES**

3 GAMES DAILY
2 ON BBO
1 ON FUNBRIDGE

12-BOARDS OVER 24 HOURS
NO NEED FOR PARTNER
PLAY WITH A ROBOT