## DISCOVERY

## EXPERT TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR CLUB BRIDGE SCORES



An EBU and EBED members' magazine-July 2021 - Issue 1

## DISCOVERY

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DISCOVERY
is published by the
ENGLISH BRIDGE UNION
in association with
ENGLISH BRIDGE EDUCATION \& DEVELOPMENT (EBED)

Broadfields, Bicester Road, Aylesbury HP19 8AZ

픙 01296317200 Fax: 01296317220
postmaster@ebu.co.uk
Web site: www.ebu.co.uk

Editor: Lou Hobhouse
Raggett House, Bowdens, Somerset, TA10 0DD
울 0790 5038575, lou@ebu.co.uk

## Editorial Board

Jerry Cope (Chairman),
Lou Hobhouse, Gordon Rainsford, Samantha Kelly

## Advertising Manager

Chris Danby at Danby Advertising
Fir Trees, Hall Road, Hainford,
Norwich NR10 3LX
룰 / Fax 01603 898678, adsales@ebu.co.uk

Discovery is published online in the Members' Area at www.ebu.co.uk

Welcome to the first 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 articles on dealing with auctions when the opposition interfere, how far to push the auction, and some invaluable tips on play - both as a defender and as declarer. We have tried to address the pitfalls which so many players fall into when participating in club bridge.
One thing an online-only magazine has allowed 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. You will need to be online. Let us know how you get on.

Lou Hobhouse, Editor

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| 19 Jul | The Angel Hotel Chippenham | 4 | 10 Oct | The Old Swan Hotel Harrogate | 4 |
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| :---: | :---: | :---: |
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| 05 Sep | Hotel Torretta Montecatini Italy | 10 |
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What do we know if we open one of a suit and partner replies 1NT? Players worry about responding 1 NT , and ask, 'can I respond 1NT with a singleton?' It is a really important bid, but a bit tricky to understand because it doesn't tell you what responder does have so much as what they do not have.

If partner opens a suit at the one level, say $1 \vee$, you have three main options if you can't support hearts. You can:
$\%$ Bid a new suit at the one level. If partner opens $1 \sqrt{ }$ you might bid 14. This shows $6+$ points and a $4+$ card suit. It is forcing - partner can't pass - and unlimited. Although it doesn't promise more than six points it could be a very strong hand, but you will get another chance to bid as a change of suit is forcing.

- Bid a new suit at the two level (not a jump bid). If partner opens $1 \mathbb{V}$, you could bid 2 or 2 . This shows a $4+$ card suit (often five) and $10+$ points, although you can stretch with a good nine count if you have a longer suit. You need more points to respond in a new suit at the two level because a change of suit is forcing. Partner may have 15 points and a balanced hand, and have to rebid 2NT, which will be too high if you don't have 10 points.
$\%$ If you can't do either of the above but you do have six points, you can only bid 1NT. Over 1『, 1NT says 'I don't have four spades (or I'd have bid 1ص), I don't have support (or I'd have supported), and I don't have 10 points (or I'd be able to bid my minor at the two level). Note that a hand that bids 1 NT opposite a $1 \boldsymbol{V}$ opening will always have a $4+$ card minor
because responder doesn't have four hearts or four spades.

A 1 NT response to a one-level opening shows 6-9 points and no four card suit that can be bid at the one level. It does not promise a balanced hand, and it could be very unbalanced! It's really as much a 'denying bid' as a 'showing bid'. It says 'partner, I would like to respond, but I can't support you, can't bid my suit at the one level, and don't have enough to bid a new suit at the two level'. It's often called the Dustbin $1 N T$ - it's a bid of last resort when nothing else will do.

Obviously over partner's 1 opener you will always be able to support clubs or bid your own suit. Some people therefore have special agreements about what a 1NT response shows. I'd stick to responding in your suit and let partner bid their hand out.
n each of these hands decide how you would respond to partner's opening bid:

| $\begin{aligned} & \text { Hand } 1 \\ & 1 \vee-? \end{aligned}$ | Hand 2 19-? | Hand 3 1-? |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| - AQ 54 | - 4 | $\pm$ Q 4 |
| - K 8 | - 75 | - K 83 |
| - A 764 | - Q 964 | -9864 |
| ¢ 986 | - AJ9643 | Q Q 987 |


| Hand 4 14-? | Hand 5 1 - -? | Hand 6 1 - ? |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| $\bigcirc 4$ | -183 | - Q 4 |
| - K 8 | $\checkmark 7532$ | - K 83 |
| - K764 | - A 4 | - 64 |
| \& AJ9863 | \% K 643 | \& Q 98763 |

Hand 1 Bid 14. You have four spades so bid them at the lowest level, showing $4+$ spades and $6+$ points. Partner can't pass this, so don't worry that you haven't yet told them that you want to bid game in something.

Hand 2 Bid 1 NT. You don't have enough points to bid at the two level so you have to bid 1 NT , even though you have a lot of shape. Remember: a 1 NT response doesn't promise a balanced hand.

Hand 3 Bid $2 \downarrow$. You are telling your partner you have 6-9 points and you don't have four hearts or four spades (you would have preferred to change suit over a minor), but you do have four or more diamonds. Although your hand looks right for no trumps, bidding 1 NT would deny support for partner's suit.

Hand 4 Bid 2 . This time you have 11 points so you can show your suit at the two level, as this promises at least a 10 count.

Hand 5 Bid $1 \mathbb{V}$. Even though your hearts are bad, you still need to bid them! All that $1 \mathbf{V}$ shows is $4+$ hearts and $6+$ points - it doesn't promise an amazing suit. If you bid 1 NT partner will pass with a $3 \cdot 4 \cdot 5 \cdot 1$ minimum, and you will miss your fit, possibly going down in 1NT when you can make a heart partscore.

Hand 6 Bid 1NT. You don't have enough points to bid 2 - this would show a 10 count, or a nine count with a good reason to upgrade. I'm afraid a seven count with a grotty suit doesn't make the cut!

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You open 1 and partner responds $1 \boldsymbol{V}$. Unless she is a passed hand, this is forcing; you must bid again. Partner might have a minimum six points, but she might have 13 or considerably more than that. If you mistakenly pass, because you have opened on a 12-count, you could miss a game or slam when partner is strong.

In this article, we will see what difference it makes to your rebid when the fourth player intervenes with an overcall:

| West | North | East | South |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| $1 \downarrow$ | Pass | $1 \downarrow$ | 19 |
| $?$ |  |  |  |

The first important point is that you are no longer forced to bid again. When partner is strong, she will have another chance to bid after South's overcall.

Just to be clear - the option to pass is a bonus given to you by the opposition. It says so much! A pass means 'I am a minimum hand, and my longest suit is
diamonds'. And we can take that logic further, 'I didn't open 1 NT , so I have a distributional hand. My longest suit is diamonds and I'm likely to have five, but I'm also likely to have a 4 -card suit as I didn't open 1NT. With six diamonds I would have rebid them. Where is my other 4 -card suit - it must be spades. With clubs I could bid 2e, and with hearts I would support partner. Otherwise I'm $4 \cdot 1 \cdot 4 \cdot 4$, and my singleton is your hearts'.

When you do rebid, the meaning of bids such as $1 \mathrm{NT}, 2 \boldsymbol{2}, 2 \vee, 2 \mathrm{NT}$, etc will be the same as if East had not intervened. One crucial difference is that you will have a spade stopper to rebid no trumps.
There's another bonus option. You can double. This is not for penalties; it shows a strong hand that was unsuitable for any of the available bids. For example, you might have a balanced 15-19 points, but without a spade stopper.

Let's consider partner's next action if you pass over 14. She is allowed to pass, too. Bids such as $2 \boldsymbol{2}, 2 \boldsymbol{*}, 3 \boldsymbol{*}, 3 \downarrow$ mean the same as they would have done without the 1 intervention. 1 NT or 2 NT would show a spade stopper. To keep the bidding alive on hands where no natural bid is suitable, partner can double. This is not for penalties, but you can pass if you have strong spades behind the overcaller.
What happens when your RHO's overcall is at a higher level, perhaps an irritating 2e or 2 ? This leaves you with fewer available bids. When there is no bid that matches your hand, pass on a lower-range hand and double on a stronger hand (for take-out).

## SUMMARY

$\%$ Where bidding space is available, make the same rebid you would have done without the overcall.
\& Otherwise, pass on a lower-range hand and double with extra strength. Such a double is not for penalties.
n the eight quiz hands below, you (South) open $1 \checkmark$ and partner responds $1 \boldsymbol{V}$. Decide what you would rebid in the three cases where East overcalls 14, or $2 \boldsymbol{1}$.

| Hand 1 | Hand 2 | Hand 3 | Hand 4 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| - A 10 | - 8654 | - K 53 | - 72 |
| - 72 | $\checkmark$ A 6 | - 104 | - AJ72 |
| - AJ 854 | - KQJ 8 | - AQJ652 | - K 10872 |
| - KJ 65 | - AQ9 | - A 3 | - AJ |


| Hand 5 | Hand 6 | Hand 7 | Hand 8 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| - A 8 | - AQ 5 | - KQ 2 | - A 2 |
| - 5 | $\checkmark 92$ | - 7 | - KQ74 |
| - AKQ 107 | - AJ 632 | -AJ763 | - AQ 1065 |
| - K 10762 | + AJ 8 | - Q 865 | - K 3 |

Hand 1 After a 1 s overcall, you have lost no bidding space and you rebid $2 \boldsymbol{2}$. Over $2 \boldsymbol{2}$, you can pass. If West then passes and your partner doubles (for take-out), you will pass for penalties. Over 2 you would pass.

Hand 2 If East had passed, you would have rebid 1NT, showing 15-17 points. Over 14, with no spade stopper, a double is better to show your extra strength. Over 2\&, you could not rebid 2NT because that would show 18+. You would again double. Over 24, you would double (or, since the bidding is so high, perhaps make a cautious pass).

Hand 3 Over 1 or 2 , you are not quite worth a jump to 3 and will rebid $2 \downarrow$. Over a weak jump overcall of $2 \boldsymbol{A}$, you should stretch to $3 \downarrow$, showing the nature of your hand. When a high overcall gives you a choice of passing or overbidding slightly, you must judge which action will be more helpful for your partner.

Hand 4 If East had passed, you would have raised to $2 \boldsymbol{\vee}$, showing a lower-range hand with 4 -card support. After a 1 or 2 es overcall, you will bid the same $2 \boldsymbol{V}$. When you are inconvenienced by a 2 overcall, it is better to show your support with $3 \checkmark$, rather than pass. Your partner will allow for the fact that you might have been forced to stretch to this rebid.

Hand 5 Over 14, you will rebid 2 . You have a good hand, yes, but a jump to 3 would be game-forcing. If East surprises you by overcalling 2 , you will pass, hoping that partner keeps the bidding alive with a (take-out) double. You would pass such a double for penalties. If East overcalls $2 \boldsymbol{\Delta}$ instead, you do best to rebid $3 \boldsymbol{2}$. This describes your hand well. Partner will not treat it as forcing-to-game when the overcall may have pushed up your intended rebid.

Hand 6 An overcall of 1 presents no problem. You rebid 1NT, showing 15-17 and a spade stopper. Over 2 , you are not continued overleaf
strong enough for $2 \mathrm{NT}(18+$ ) and would double to show extra strength. If partner continued with 2 or $2 \boldsymbol{\downarrow}$, you would bid 2 NT then. An overcall of $2 \boldsymbol{q}$ would leave you with no good action. Some players would stretch to 2 NT , some would double and some cautious folk might pass.

Hand 7 Over 14, you cannot rebid 1NT because this would show 15-17. It would be very reasonable to bid $2 \mathbf{2}$, but with five points in spades a pass is preferable. If partner reopens with a double, you can bid 1NT then. If partner rebids 2 or 2 instead, you will pass.

Hand 8 Sometimes, you simply don't care what the opponents have bid! As soon as you hear partner respond $1 \boldsymbol{\vee}$, you are heading for $4 \boldsymbol{~ w i t h}$ this splendid hand. You will make the same rebid whether East overcalls $1 \mathbf{~}, 2 \boldsymbol{e r}$ 24. You hear some players say: "I took your raise to 4 as a sign-off. I only had 13 points myself; I couldn't believe we would have a slam on." What nonsense! Your partner's 1 response might be based on some uninspiring 6-count. When you jump to $4 \boldsymbol{\bullet}$, you obviously have a great hand. Quite rightly, you show what you have and leave any move towards a slam to your partner.

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Many players are ingrained (correctly) with the idea that when you have two suits you should open with your longest and then bid your second suit at the next opportunity.

This is sound logic, as showing two suits gives your partner two options if he is weak, and the odds of finding a fit when you give him two choices are dramatically increased.

However when the opponents start intervening remember there is another call you can consider which is to double and ask your partner for a suit. This is especially useful if you are three-suited, and sometimes it will also keep 1NT in the picture. You are West. Imagine the auction starts in simple fashion:


It would be very easy to bid 2 without
any thought to show 5-4 (just as if your partner had responded 1 NT or $2 \boldsymbol{2}$ ), but this narrows the options for partner.

For starters your side might belong in clubs, there's no reason why partner can't have a four or five card suit and it be the best strain for your side. (Taking ruffs in the short hand often gives extra tricks, so if the opponents lead spades they will be helping you make tricks if you play in clubs)

There is also the option that partner has a big spade stack and might be able to leave the double in (one of the consequences of playing negative doubles), as well as the fact that partner can
bid 1NT. This might be the safest contract when your partner has a misfit hand such as ゆ J10743, 『107, 86, \$J1064.

Effectively the second round double is a way of bidding two extra suits, and gives partner more options.


On the previous page we looked at your second bid after opening the auction, using a take-out double at your second turn to offer a choice of suits.
The same logic can often be applied when we have started the bidding for our side with an overcall. Let's imagine you are sitting West, and have a pleasant hand, towards the higher end of the typical overcall range of 8-17 or so:

| ¢ AK954 | W | N | E | S |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| $\bullet 7$ |  |  |  | 17 |
| - AQ 54 | 14 | 2 | Pass | Pass |
| * 875 | ? |  |  |  |

With good opening values you feel like you have a little to spare and you decide to make a second bid. What should you say?

You have no justification at all for rebidding your spades. You have shown five with your first bid and there is no reason to think partner wasn't listening.

What about bidding $3 \downarrow$ ? After all you are 5-4 and surely partner has some of those if they don't like spades ....

The solution (as you might be able to guess from the title of this article) is to double for take-out.

Why should double be better than bidding $3 \downarrow$ ? To answer that question let us take a look at some possible hands for partner:


On this hand the best contract is $2 \mathbf{A}$, keeping as low as possible, and this is what partner will choose. If you bid $3 \checkmark$ he has the choice of passing or bidding 34, both of which leave you a little too high for comfort.


On this hand the best contract is $3 \boldsymbol{\beta}$, and that is what partner will choose if you consult with a double. If instead you bid 3 he will have to go back to 34 which will not play well with only seven trumps between you.


On this hand the best contract is $2 \boldsymbol{V}$ doubled, and this is the only way you can get there. You should beat it by two tricks perhaps one on a bad day - but regardless it is your best chance of a plus score. If instead you bid $3 \checkmark$ partner will pass and you will not enjoy the play.

Summary overleaf

## OVERCALL THEN DOUBLE

## Summary

When you overcall and then make a takeout double at your second chance you tell partner the following things:
$\%$ You have a higher end overcall, now it will be opening points+, enough to suggest that your side might hold the majority of the points despite partner's silence.
$\%$ You have at least three cards in the unbid suits and you are prepared for partner to choose his longest one.
\& You have shortage (typically a singleton, a void is great and a doubleton will do if the hand is strong enough) in the opponents' suit.

## QUIZ TIME

You are sitting West. What action would you take next?

| Hand 1 | Hand 2 |
| :---: | :---: |
| $\bigcirc 5$ | - 8 |
| - AQ 3 | - AKQ 2 |
| - Q 9764 | -KJ943 |
| - AJ 83 | - 543 |
| Hand 3 | Hand 4 |
| ¢ A 5 | - A Q 93 |
| $\checkmark 2$ | $\checkmark 4$ |
| - KJ963 | - K743 |
| \& AK975 | - A964 |


| $\mathbf{W}$ | $\mathbf{N}$ | $\mathbf{E}$ | $\mathbf{S}$ |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| $1 \downarrow$ | $1 \boldsymbol{1}$ | Pass | Pass |
| $?$ |  |  |  |

Hand 1 should reopen with a double, and bring every strain into the picture. Partner can choose hearts or clubs, or show delayed support for diamonds. He can also bid 1NT if he has a spade stopper (this will be a weaker hand than

## ANSWERS

if he bid 1NT directly) or even pass if he has the spades loaded.
Hand 2 again should double. It may seem odd when it has such strong hearts, but remember if you bid $2 \downarrow$ then you commit to the three level if partner wants to put you back to diamonds. Would you really want to play in 3 facing

$$
\text { \&Q9764 95 } 84 \text { ¢KJ76? }
$$

Hand 3 can't double as it has no heart tolerance but it can bid 2\%. This suggests the hand it holds, probably 5-5 with good suits where you can force partner to pick one.
Hand 4 should pass out 1 . It may feel painful to let your opponents play at the one level, but remember partner is marked with a sack of rhubarb, since he has passed 14 on a hand without great spade length. Either partner has the hearts, in which case he has no points, or the opponents have the hearts in which case they are in the wrong strain.

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Sometimes in bridge you feel as though you are forced into making a guess whether to bid on or go quietly, or whether to push for game or for slam. On many occasions you can reduce your guesswork by involving your partner in the process. Partners like to feel useful, and they tend to get a bit grumpy if you take a stab in the dark and it doesn't work. Here are some of the common situations where you can involve your partner:

## Trial bids

This is a way of asking partner for help in a particular suit in an effort to find game. It allows you to describe something extra about your hand to involve partner in the decision about whether to bid game.

| West | East |
| :---: | :---: |
| 14. | 24 |
| 3 (trial bid) |  |

Opener should have five plus cards in spades to ensure agreement (responder may
have raised with only three), invitational values, and an outside suit in which help is required. Typical holdings will be xxx or Axxx.
Responder will sign off at the three level if minimum, accept the try if maximum or, if somewhere in between, look at their holding in the trial suit, and bid game if they can offer help in that suit (shortage or an honour card are help).
Here are a couple of examples:


In A, above, East is in-between, but with only one diamond loser should raise to $4 \mathbf{4}$.


In B, East has the same sort of hand, but now there are three diamonds losers, so should call 3 a

## Unassuming cue bids

An unassuming cue bid (or UCB) is a bid of the opponent's suit when partner has made an overcall. It is a way of distinguishing between a pre-emptive raise of partner's suit and a hand with some genuine values. It says nothing about the opponent's suit (unassuming!).
A cue bid of the opponent's suit shows support for partner's suit. It shows a sound (high-card) raise to at least the level to

Continued overleaf

## Don't guess! Involve partner in decision making

which you are forced by the auction. A sound raise to the two level would normally be nine points plus.

| West | North | East | South <br> $(1 \vee)$ |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| $1 \varphi$ | $(2 \dot{2})$ | $2 \vee$ |  |

In this auction East shows a good raise to 2. or higher, and is stronger than an immediate 24. It can be useful if partner needs to know whether to compete on to $3 \boldsymbol{s}$ if the opponents continue to bid. You have removed some of the guesswork for your partner by narrowing down the type of hand you may hold.

Using an unassuming cue bid to show values also means that you are free to make a pre-emptive raise to $3 \boldsymbol{4}$, in an attempt to force the opponents to guess. This would show four spades and a hand below nine points.

## Double

If you are sitting looking at a good hand and want to take some further action but can't think what to do, the chances are that your best option is either Fourth Suit Forcing, or double. Doubles in competition (when both sides are bidding) should not
be used for penalties. On grounds of frequency they are best used to say 'I have a hand that is too good to pass, but I have no alternative clear-cut action'.

It is true that you will sometimes be dealt a stack of the suit your opponents have just bid and would wish to make a penalty double, but these hands are much less common. In any case, if you make a smooth pass, your partner might always find a reopening double asking you to bid. You can then pass, thereby converting it into a penalty double.

Take this example - you are sitting East:

|  | - K 9 <br> - J 4 <br> - AK 53 <br> *) 9432 |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| West | North | East | South (1『) |
| 14 | (3v) | ? |  |

The only thing you can be sure of on this hand is that you want to take some action. It could be right to play in spades, possibly no trumps, conceivably a minor suit, or even defend their contract doubled. You could make a blind guess, but double says it all.

You have asked your partner to make the choice - what could be better? You make them feel valued and consulted, and you cannot be blamed if they make the wrong decision!

Here's another example:


Unaware of the terrible split, N/S have bid too high. East cannot double because partner will bid on. Here, East is relieved West chooses to involve partner and has doubled rather than rebid spades. Now East can pass and collect a handsome penalty. $\square$

When the opposition bidding dies out at a low level, should you pass it out and defend or should you come into the bidding? Consider these two auctions:

| $\mathbf{W}$ | $\mathbf{N}$ | $\mathbf{E}$ | $\mathbf{S}$ |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| $1 \boldsymbol{i}$ | Pass | $1 \boldsymbol{\varphi}$ | Pass |
| $2 \boldsymbol{Q}$ | Pass | Pass | $?$ |


| $\mathbf{W}$ | $\mathbf{N}$ | $\mathbf{E}$ | $\mathbf{S}$ |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| 1 | Pass | $1 \boldsymbol{Q}$ | Pass |
| 2 | Pass | Pass | $?$ |

You should be eager to compete when the opponents bid and raise a suit to the twolevel and stop there. If their side has a trump fit, your side will also have a trump fit most of the time. If their bidding stopped at the two level, they do not have 25-26 points, probably not even 23-24 as they did not invite a game. They usually have around 19-22 points and, if that is the case, your side has just as much. If the points are
more-or-less evenly divided, and each side has a trump fit, each side can usually make eight tricks. If you pass, they make their contract. If you compete and drive them to the three level, they may fail. That is your reward.
In the first auction where they have a sure trump fit, South should be keen to bid. Make a delayed double, a delayed overcall, something to try to push them to the three level. In the second auction, they may have a trump fit but this is far from certain. Be prepared to compete if you are short in their suit (use a take-out double), but pass and defend with $3+$ cards in their suit.

| $\mathbf{W}$ | $\mathbf{N}$ | $\mathbf{E}$ | $\mathbf{S}$ |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| $1 \boldsymbol{V}$ | Pass | $2 \boldsymbol{\varphi}$ | Pass |
| Pass | $?$ |  |  |

In the auction above $\mathrm{E} / \mathrm{W}$ have a known trump fit and the bidding stopped at the two level. North should try and bid, and these are the choices:
\% The delayed overcall: This suggests a poor $5+$-card suit. If it were a strong suit, North would have overcalled on the first round.
\& The delayed double: This shows a shortage in their suit, three plus cards in the unbid suits and below 12 HCP (otherwise North would have made a first-round double).
$\%$ The delayed 2NT: At least $4-4$ in the minors.
If the opponents push on to the three level after one of these delayed actions, do not bid again. Be satisfied that you have pushed them one higher. You now have a better chance of defeating them.

The 3-over-2-Level rule
If the opponents have bid and raised a suit to the two level, be eager to compete, even if it takes you to the three level.
In addition, if they have stopped in a suit at the two level and you have a singleton or
void in their suit, compete with a take-out double.

## The 3-over-3 rule

If the opponents have competed to the three level, choose to defend if your side has only eight trumps, but you may bid your suit above them at the three-level if your side has at least nine trumps.

| $W$ | $N$ | $E$ | $S$ |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| $1 \nabla$ | $1 \Phi$ | $2 \downarrow$ | $2 \boldsymbol{Q}$ |
| $3 \varphi$ | $?$ |  | $?$ |

Either North or South should bid 34 if they know their side has nine spades, for instance if South had four spades (North's overcall promised five spades), or if North had six spades.

## The 4-over-3 rule

If your side has only the values for a partscore, do not compete to the four level.

| $W$ | N | E | S |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 | $?$ |  |

Neither East nor West should push on to $4 \checkmark$. You need 25-26 points to have a good
chance for $4 \boldsymbol{V}$ or $4 \boldsymbol{\text { . }}$. You need just as many points to have a good chance at $4 \boldsymbol{\mathcal { L }}$ or 4 your points suggest no more than a partscore, you will fail at the four level about $80 \%$ of the time. It is better to pass their contract at the three level and hope that you can defeat it. Five tricks in defence is often easier than ten tricks as declarer.


What action should North take with:

| Hand 1 | Hand 2 |
| :---: | :---: |
| - 8632 | ¢ 197632 |
| - K 7 | - J62 |
| - A63 | - KQ 8 |
| \% Q 985 | - 9 |
| Hand 3 | Hand 4 |
| - 42 | - QJ 52 |
| - 73 | - 4 |
| -K8643 | - Q 85432 |
| \& AJ62 | \% K 7 |



## ANSWERS

Hand 1 - Double (take-out)
Hand $2-2 \boldsymbol{c}$
Hand 3 - 2NT (minors)
Hand 4 - Double (take-out, but remove 3 by partner to $3 \checkmark$. This allows you to catch the spade fit if available)

Hand 5-3e (Double is not safe since a $3 \checkmark$ reply takes you past any level of safety)

Hand 6 - Double (for take-out) at pairs if not vulnerable. Pass at teams, or if vulnerable.

| $\mathbf{W}$ | $\mathbf{N}$ | $\mathbf{E}$ | $\mathbf{S}$ |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| $1 \boldsymbol{Q}$ | Pass | $2 \boldsymbol{\imath}$ | Pass |
| Pass | Dble | Pass | $?$ |

What action should South take with:

| Hand 7 | Hand 8 | Hand 9 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| - AK62 | ¢ K 65 | ¢ 873 |
| - 83 | - 1932 | $\checkmark$ A 2 |
| -9642 | -6432 | - QJ5 3 |
| -172 | - KQ | 2 Q 986 |


| $\mathbf{W}$ | $\mathbf{N}$ | $\mathbf{E}$ | $\mathbf{S}$ |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| $1 \boldsymbol{V}$ | Pass | $1 \boldsymbol{V}$ | Pass |
| $2 \boldsymbol{V}$ | Pass | Pass | $2 \boldsymbol{\downarrow}$ |
| $3 \boldsymbol{\psi}$ | $?$ |  |  |

What action should North take with:
$\quad$ Hand 13
$\times$ KJ 10
$\vee$ A9 5
K Q 10
-9863


Hand 7-3 (do not pass for penalties!)
Hand 8-2NT (ostensibly for minors, but if partner bids $3 \boldsymbol{\$}$, remove to 3 to show the choice is between diamonds and hearts)
Hand 9-2NT (pick a minor)
Hand 10 - Double
Hand 11 - Close between Double and $2 \boldsymbol{s}$. my preference is to Double. Partner could be $1 \cdot 5 \cdot 4 \cdot 3$ or $1 \cdot 3 \cdot 3 \cdot 6$ and so you find a better trump fit than spades. Double does not come with guarantees partner might bid $2 \checkmark$ with a $2 \cdot 4 \cdot 4 \cdot 3$ pattern, but bidding $2 \boldsymbol{1}$ does not promise success either. It is usually better not to put all your eggs in one basket.
Hand 12 - Pass is sensible since you have good defence in diamonds. Still, it would be nice to defend at the three level rather than the two level. I would risk 2 at pairs whether vulnerable or not, but at teams I would pass if vulnerable, bid if not vulnerable.
continued overleaf

I n this summer's special bidding quiz, you are South playing match-pointed pairs.

| Hand 1 |
| :--- |
| A K 963 |
| Q J 5 |
| 102 |
| K J 5 |


| Love All. Dealer North. |  |  |  |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| W | N | E | S |
|  | Pass | 1 | 1 |
| Pass | Pass | 2 | $?$ |

```
Hand 5
& QJ }9
\bullet }
QQ1073
& A975
```

| N/S |  |  |  |  | Game. | Dealer | North. |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| W | N | E | S |  |  |  |  |
|  | Pass | $1 \downarrow$ | Pass |  |  |  |  |
| $2 \boldsymbol{v}$ | Pass | Pass | $?$ |  |  |  |  |



| N/S |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :--- |
| Game. | Dealer East. |  |  |
| $\mathbf{W}$ | $\mathbf{N}$ | $\mathbf{E}$ | $\mathbf{S}$ |
|  |  | Pass | $1 \mathrm{NT}^{1}$ |
| Pass | $2 \boldsymbol{V}^{2}$ | Pass | $2 \boldsymbol{\Lambda}$ |
| Pass | $3 \boldsymbol{V}$ | Pass | $?$ |
| ${ }^{1} 12-14,^{2}$ | five or more spades |  |  |



```
Hand 3
& }
\veeAJ763
* K9
&A853
```

| E/W |  |  |  |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Wame. | Dealer | South. |  |
| W | N | E | S |
|  |  |  | $1 \downarrow$ |
| Pass | $1 s$ | 2 | $?$ |



Hand 8

- 975
-Q10 9
- AK Q 105
+K 6


```
Hand 4
&-
\veeQ76 32
* 10963
-KJ103
```

Game All. Dealer West.

| $\mathbf{W}$ | $\mathbf{N}$ | $\mathbf{E}$ | $\mathbf{S}$ |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Pass | 1\& | Pass | ? |



| Love All. Dealer North. |  |  |  |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| W | $\mathbf{N}$ | E | S |
|  | Pass | $1 \vee$ | $1 \boldsymbol{s}$ |
| Pass | Pass | $2 \downarrow$ | Dble |
| Pass | $3 \mathbf{e}$ | All Pass |  |

You have sound opening values yourself and do not wish to let East play quietly in 2. What can you do without misdescribing your hand? You have already shown your five-card spade suit and have no other suit to bid. The solution is to double. Partner will quite often put you back to 2 but here, with a reasonable fivecard club suit, partner prefers $3 \boldsymbol{2}$.

If left in 3 , as shown, declarer should lose just two diamonds, a heart and a club. Even if the defenders play trumps very early, thereby preventing a diamond ruff, it should be possible to set up a long spade. East/West fare better going on to $3 \$$, which would go one down, though this is not easy for them to judge. 2 would not make with two trumps and four top tricks outside to lose.


| N/S Game. Dealer East. |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| W | N | E | S |
|  |  | Pass | $1 \mathrm{NT}^{+}$ |
| Pass | $2{ }^{2}$ | Pass | 24 |
| Pass | $3 \vee$ | Pass | 4, |
| 1 12-14 | five | more | des |

Partner's transfer followed by a new suit should create a game force. This means you could bid $3 \mathbf{4}$ to show the spade support if you wanted to. On this hand, however, you have an unsuitable hand for a spade slam - a minimum in terms of high cards for your 12-14 1NT opening and no aces either. A 'fast
arrival jump to 4 is therefore your correct bid, which partner should respect and pass.

With a stronger playing hand (perhaps four spades and an ace) you would bid 3s to allow partner room to look for slam via cuebidding.


| E/W |  |  |  |  | Game. | Dealer | South. |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| W | N | E | S |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | $1 \downarrow$ |  |  |  |  |
| Pass | 14 | 2 | Pass |  |  |  |  |
| All Pass |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

If East had not overcalled, you bid you choose to make should would have rebid 2 because carry a positive message. For you have to keep the bidding example, if you bid $2 \boldsymbol{V}$, that alive following partner's would promise a six-card heart change-of-suit response. The suit. Likewise if you bid 3 s it overcall means partner will get would show clubs, which you another chance to bid even if have, and extra values, which you pass, which means that any you do not.


| Game All. Dealer West. |  |  |  |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| $\mathbf{W}$ | $\mathbf{N}$ | E | S |
| Pass | 10 | Pass | 1NT |
| Pass | 2 | All Pass |  |

With six high card points, you have enough strength to respond. Besides, you would not relish playing in spades with your void if $1 \boldsymbol{4}$ became the final contract. Your longest suit is hearts and you do have the five-card suit, which a $2 \boldsymbol{r}$ response would promise. You do not, however, have sufficient high cards for a two-over-one response even in Acol with its modest requirements for doing so.

Some players use the 'rule of 14 ' here, saying that if the length of your longest suit and your HCP come to 14 or more you can bid the suit at the two level. Adding six and five comes to eleven, well short of the requirement. Your only option therefore is what some call the 'dustbin bid' of 1 NT . This does not promise a balanced hand. It simply says that you are too strong to pass,
too weak to bid a new suit at the two level and too short in partner's suit to raise.
If you mistakenly responded $2 \boldsymbol{V}$, partner would rebid $2 \mathbf{A}$, which would not play well. In contrast, 2 is unbeatable. Even if East were to lead a low diamond, allowing the defenders to start with three rounds of trumps, it would be possible to make two diamonds, four clubs, the A and a ruff for eight in all.


The fact that the opponents have subsided at the two level despite having a fit indicates that they have limited values. This is assuming the opponents know what they are doing, anyway! A double here does not show a strong hand with hearts but rather a hand too weak for a take-out double on the previous round. Perhaps you can make a contract your way, particularly if partner
has four spades, which means you can play at the two level. In any event, if you can push the opponents up to the three level, you increase your chance of defeating them.

With the $\boldsymbol{\Phi} \mathrm{K}$ and the both where you want them, you can defeat $3 \square$ taking two tricks in each black suit and a trump. If the opponents did not take the push, your side
could make 2 easily - indeed nine tricks are possible if the opponents do not lead clubs early in the play.

Note that although 3s might make because of the favourable layout, North does not bid it. Going down in 3 would undo the good work of South's reopening double. There could also be some danger of going one down doubled or two down undoubled for the dreaded -200.


While partner's $1 \boldsymbol{4}$ response does not not overstate your values but could lead to promise any more than four spades, it is correct to raise to 24. A 4-3 fit with the ability to ruff in the short trump hand, which your singleton club suggests, is quite playable - and the alternatives are unattractive.

A 2 reverse would be a gross overbid taking the auction too high - placing you with at least 16 points. Partner would probably jump to 3 NT. A 2 rebid would
an inferior contract if (as is the case here) partner lacks the strength to bid again.
2. makes in comfort with four trump tricks, the red aces, the K and at least one club ruff. If you rebid 2 instead, it should fail with three trumps, two hearts and a club to lose. The limit in a no trump contract is seven tricks - but there is no way now you can stop in 1NT.


You have a sound opening bid and one of the black suits. Doubling also rightly do not want wish West to play caters for the possibility that partner quietly in $2 \vee$. With support for the has some decent diamonds and other suits, your best action by far is a wishes to defend. Indeed, this last double. You do not mind if partner mentioned possibility comes to puts you back to hearts or introduces fruition here.


| Love All. Dealer West. |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| W | N | E | S |
| Pass | 17 | Pass | 2 |
| Pass | 3\% | Pass | 37 |
| Pass | $3{ }^{1}$ | Pass | 4NT |
| Pass | 5*2 | Pass | 6 |
| All Pass |  |  |  |
| ${ }^{1}$ First-round spade control |  |  |  |
| ${ }^{2}$ Three or zero key cards |  |  |  |

You have at least an ace more than you needed for your initial response as well as fitting cards in both of partner's suits. Since partner's high reverse creates a game force, you can and should take the auction slowly by bidding $3 \boldsymbol{}$ to set hearts as trumps. Partner is then able to cue bid 34, which in turn allows you to check on key cards.

If you mistakenly jumped to $4 \boldsymbol{V}$, that would end the auction. It would not be safe for partner to bid on because, if you were missing the ace of diamonds there were would be three losers. Nor would it be right for you to bid 4NT directly over $3 \mathbf{~ - ~ t h e r e ~}$ could be two or three fast spade losers if partner's values were even more concentrated in hearts and clubs.


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British aristocracy love having their names associated with something, preferably clothing or food. The Lords Cardigan and Raglan went head to head in the 1850s in the former category; Earl Grey and the Earl of Sandwich are the obvious leaders in the latter. The Duke of Wellington straddles both camps, with his boot and his beef. Lord Nelson gets an honourable mention in the Sports section, wrestling's half-Nelson being a tribute to his one arm and one eye. Top of the Sports group, especially for whist and bridge players, is Lord Yarborough. The vast majority of Dukes, Earls and Lords had to be content with having pubs named after them.

The Duke of Cumberland is another double nominee, although he would have been less than proud to be remembered as the inventor of the sausage, and as the holder of a 30-point whist hand that failed to take a trick.

The hand, or rather deal, is described in The Whist Table, A Treasury of notes on the Royal Game, published in 1884. The Duke of Cumberland, the third son of George III and known as the 'Butcher of Culloden', was sitting West.


The last card dealt by South was shown face up; it was a club, so clubs automatically became trumps. The Duke, sitting to the left
of the dealer was on lead, and he chose the $\$ 7$. North won the first trick with the $8-$ remember, there are no dummies in whist and played a diamond for South to ruff. A club to the 9 and 10 was followed by a second diamond ruff. A third club finesse, followed by the drawing of the last trump, meant that North could cash his seven diamond winners, while the noble Lord impotently discarded his kings and queens (and aces). North-South had made all thirteen tricks.

The description concludes: ‘The Duke is said to have lost a wager of $£ 20,000$ in connection with this hand.' That's over $£ 2.5$ million in today's money - wow! The article doesn't say what the wager was. It seems clear to me, and surely to the Duke, that the hand was rigged; maybe the wager was that the Duke wouldn't take a single trick.

If you are defending against a slam, or indeed a game, that has been bid on few points, a trump lead is a good idea, to cut
down on declarer's ruffs. On almost any layout the Duke's trump lead would have maximised the number of tricks he would win. Alas, not on this one! Here a mundane spade or heart lead would have beaten the contract by six (six!) tricks - and he only wanted one trick. Even a diamond lead would get it one down.
The deal, or something very similar, became famous when Ian Fleming used it in the 1955 James Bond novel, Moonraker.
M and Bond are convinced that Sir Hugo Drax cheats at bridge. (He uses a shiny cigarette case to see the cards as he deals them, so has a big advantage on one quarter of the hands.) Bond and M arrange to play against Drax and his henchman Max Meyer at Blades club. The normal stakes at the club are $£ 10$ per hundred, plus $£ 100$ per rubber, but Drax suggests $£ 50$ and $£ 500$, and Bond agrees. At the end of a long evening the stakes have risen to $£ 150$ and $£ 1500$. Bond and $M$ win the first game of the last rubber. It is now Bond's deal and he gives M a prearranged signal before switching packs. These are the cards:


Note the differences: here Drax's trumps are only KJ9, and the trumps are 5-5, not 5-4
Drax looks at his cards and suggests an extra side-bet of $£ 100$ per trick. Bond is feigning drunkenness and accepts. There now follows one of the most improbable bidding sequences ever to appear in an English Bridge Union publication.

| South | West | North | East |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Bond | Meyer | $M$ | Drax |
| $7 \%$ | Pass | Pass | Dble |
| Redble | All Pass |  |  |

The bidding is absurd, but South had to end in somehow. The redouble is beyond absurd!
Bond checks that the side-bet is subject to the double (it is) before he redoubles.
Meyer knows he is going to be in trouble if he finds the wrong lead. He doesn't have the option of leading a trump and sweats between hearts (notice how Fleming has differentiated between Meyer's spades and hearts) and his three-card diamond sequence.
You can click on the deal to play the hand in a new window. What should Meyer lead and does it make a difference?
Meyer leads a diamond and Bond, of course, makes the contract, ending up $£ 15,000$ ahead, the equivalent of $£ 400,000$ in 2020.
So, what have we learned? That high level contracts can be made on very few points, so long as they have lots of trumps and a void or two. The important thing is to be able to set up a long weak side suit for some eventual winners.

We also learned that James Bond cheats at cards, just as he cheated at golf in Goldfinger in 1959. It's for Queen and country, so quite acceptable.

Footnote: The grand slam is made on six points in the whist deal, and eight points in Moonraker. You can actually make a grand slam on five points with this layout:


You have enough trumps in dummy to cater for the 4-2 break in diamonds.

And how might you get to 7 on this layout? What about:

| West | North | East | South |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  | 2\% | Pass |
| 2 | $4 \mathrm{NT}^{1}$ | Dble | 5\% |
| Pass | Pass | $6{ }^{2}$ | Pass |
| $6 V^{3}$ | Pass | Pass | 79 ${ }^{4}$ |
| Pass | Pass | Dble | Pass |
| Pass | Pass ${ }^{5}$ |  |  |
| ${ }^{1}$ (very) Unusual No Trump <br> ${ }^{2}$ bid your better major |  |  |  |
| ${ }^{4}$ South suspects that $6 \vee$ might be beaten with a diamond ruff or two, if the clubs break 1-1. If clubs don't break, then 7\& could be a good sacrifice. Has clear memories of reading Moonraker as an impressionable youth <br> ${ }^{5}$ North never read Moonraker so fails to find a redouble |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

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TThis article is about ruffing losers in the dummy in trump contracts. Not all deals are ideal for this; on some deals you should draw trumps pronto. However, on occasion you should delay the drawing of trumps until you have eradicated your side-suit losers.

How can you tell which hand type it is? Is this a draw trumps deal or is it a ruff-in-the-dummy deal? The answer comes from the essential Count and Plan undertaken on the sight of dummy.
The basic rule of thumb is that you should draw trumps if you can count sufficient winners. If, however, they are on the thin side, you should look to make use of dummy's trumps for ruffing purposes.

Some hands require a little preparation in order to pave the way for ruffs. The theme of conceding your losers early instead of grabbing tricks as soon as possible has an echo from card play in no trumps. Look at these hands where we expand the themes:


As declarer in $4 \boldsymbol{V}$ you naturally Count and Plan on the sight of dummy. In terms of winners you can see one spade, five hearts, one diamond and two clubs. That makes nine. What about losers? You have one spade, no hearts, two diamonds and no clubs. That's a discrepancy - nine winners and three losers.

Now it is very important to realise that there is no point in cashing the top clubs and ruffing a club (or two) in the South
hand. You still won't make any more than five heart tricks and nine overall. That would be ruffing in the long hand and is (usually) the wrong thing to do.

The only way of increasing the number of winners available is by ruffing in the short hand. Does that give you any ideas? Well, it should. If you can ruff a spade in the dummy (North) that will increase the number of winners by one.
Note that with insufficient winners it would be wrong to draw trumps. Should you do so you'd have two losing spades and no way of dealing with them. So, the right play is to win the $A$ at trick one and immediately play off the A and another spade, conceding trick three to the opponents. They will (in all probability) cash a couple of diamond tricks and play, say, a club. Now you can ruff your last spade in the dummy and, finally, draw trumps.
Note that your ten tricks are made up of one spade, six hearts, one diamond and two
continued overleaf
clubs. The sixth heart trick is actually a ruff in the dummy. Note also that you should ruff your last spade with the $\geqslant 10$ or the $\boldsymbol{V}$, to prevent a possible over-ruff by East (unlikely, but not impossible). Don't send a boy on a man's errand... Anyway, that's a side issue.

What about the next one? How many winners and losers do we have here?


You reach 4 as South via a transfer sequence and West leads the Q . Naturally, having thanked partner graciously for his dummy, you Count your tricks and settle down to creating a Plan.
Let's count winners. There are four spades (assuming a 3-2 break), three diamonds and
two clubs. That's nine tricks. For sure, a 3-3 diamond break would swell that to ten, but a 3-3 break is against the odds (36\%).
What about losers? Well, you must lose two hearts and you must lose at least one spade (so if trumps are 4-1 that's Goodnight, Irene). Again, this doesn't add up. Nine winners and three losers. By now you will see that with this type of anomaly you should look for a ruff, and not draw trumps. There would be no point in trying to ruff clubs in the North hand (don't ruff in the long hand), the aim being to ruff a loser in the short trump hand.
Now, to be clear, you are taking a ruff in declarer's hand and not in the dummy but it is in the hand with the shorter trump suit and that is the crucial point. To do that, though, the South hand has to be denuded of hearts. So... let's execute the Plan.
Win the club lead and play and lose a heart. Win the return (a club, say) and lead and lose a heart. Win the return, play off two top trumps, ending in dummy and now ruff the losing heart in hand. Assuming that the trumps are 3-2 you will have four spade tricks, one ruff in the dummy, three diamonds and two clubs. In other words,
that's five trump tricks, three diamonds and two clubs. You cannot make five trump tricks if you attempt to ruff clubs in the North hand. You can try it yourself by clicking on the hand below:


If you were to play off two top trumps early in the hand you could be defeated. Sometime later you'd have to lead a heart. East would win that and draw declarer's last trump with the boss spade. Now the defenders could cash two more heart tricks. East-West would make one spade trick and three heart tricks to defeat 4ヘ.

Quiz overleaf

## QUESTION 1

H

| $\mathbf{W}$ | $\mathbf{N}$ | $\mathbf{E}$ | $\boldsymbol{S}$ |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
|  |  |  | $1 \boldsymbol{Q}$ |
| Pass | $2 \boldsymbol{e}$ | Pass | $2 \boldsymbol{\alpha}$ |
| Pass | $4 \boldsymbol{e}$ | All Pass |  |



## Preliminary analysis

Your Count and Plan reveals eight easy winners (five spades, one diamond and two clubs) plus a slow trick in hearts.

How might you generate a tenth trick?

## ANSWER

You have three certain losers (a heart, a diamond and a club). In point of fact, if you were to draw trumps you'd have two heart losers (unless some untutored player in a defender's chair obliged by playing the A on air). In terms of winners you have five spades, one heart, one diamond and two clubs - four losers and nine winners.

The extra trick is a heart ruff on table in the short trump hand. Take the A and play a heart (the Q is as good as anything). When next on lead play the $\vee \mathrm{K}$ and ruff the losing heart in dummy. Now you have six trump tricks to go with one heart, one diamond and two clubs.

## QUESTION 2

H ow might you play in 4 after the following auction?


## Preliminary analysis

Your Count and Plan reveals nine probable winners (four spades, two diamonds and three clubs) but that is dependent on trumps breaking 3-2. Even if spades split nicely, you are a trick short. How might you generate a tenth?

## ANSWER

You can put dummy's heart shortage to good use by ruffing a heart loser in the short trump hand. It's hard work but worth it. Win the diamond, give up a heart. Win the return, give up a heart. Now you can win the next lead, cash two top spades and finally
ruff the losing heart in dummy. The opponents have a winning trump, and they are welcome to take it anytime they want.


## PAUL'S POSTSCRIPT

$\%$ In both of the quiz deals you couldn't make extra trump tricks if you attempted to ruff dummy's long suits in the closed hand. Note this - it's very important. In general terms it is wrong to ruff in the long hand (unless you need to do so for entry purposes or to set up a second suit).
$\%$ Note that East-West could beat hand 4 on the second deal with accurate defence. If East-West were to lead trumps at every opportunity they could prevent your ruffs in the dummy.
\% Trump leads are an important part of the defenders' armoury, but only if you think declarer is going for a ruff-in-thedummy. He may have other ideas...

This article is all about how to handle common suit combinations - ones that are frequently misplayed.
The key is to handle suits that may misbehave by breaking badly, but you often need to keep a beady eye on entries. Consider, in isolation, this combination:


Playing in no-trumps, you want to make five tricks in the suit. No problem if diamonds break 3-2, but what if they are 4-1?

There's nothing to be done if East is rude enough to hold $\downarrow$ J9xx but what if West has that holding? Now, with loads of entries in the South hand there would be little problem; you could cash two top honours in any sensible order (crucially, not the ace and queen) and spot the bad break.

Returning to the South hand you could take the marked finesse of the $\$ 10$ to bring home the bacon. Let's put the combination into a full deal:


After West leads the 10, your Count and Plan tells you that 3NT has nine top tricks provided that you can bring in five diamond tricks - an easy prospect on a 3-2 split. You take the A and can play the diamonds without any great technique by
playing off the $\diamond \mathrm{K}$ and one to the $\checkmark \mathrm{Q}$, noting the 4-1 break.
Now you can come to hand with a high spade and take the marked diamond finesse against West's $\$$, notching up your contract via two spades, one heart, five diamonds and one club.

Now suppose we alter the cards a little by switching some high cards around. Look at the hand overleaf. What's different?

continued overleaf


Once again, West leads the 10 against 3NT and your Count and Plan reveals nine winners - provided you can bring in the diamonds without loss.

You take the (on the first or second round - it makes no difference) and must handle the diamonds with due care and attention.

This time, with no external entries to the South hand, you must play a low diamond to the queen and then a diamond to the
king. This way, you are in the right hand at the right time to take advantage of the 4-1 split.

Should diamonds be 3-2 you'd be in Easy Street. Should East be the culprit holding four diamonds you'd have to suffer defeat with as much good grace as you could muster. As it is, you can take the marked finesse against the jack and claim your contract.

Now, a twist. How should you handle the following combination if entries to the North hand are limited? The lead is in the South hand.


The answer is that you should lead the ten to the queen and then lead back to the king. This way, you can pick up Jxxx with West. Failure to unblock the ten would block the suit.


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## QUIZ - Marked Finesses \& Timing

1How might you play in 3NT after this auction:

| South | North |
| :--- | :--- |
| $2 N T$ | $3 N T$ |


|  | $$ |
| :---: | :---: |
| South plays in 3NT. West leads the $\vee Q$. |  |
|  | - AJ 84 <br> - AK 5 <br> - A 108 <br> - A 106 |

Preliminary analysis.
Your Count and Plan reveals seven top tricks (one spade, two hearts, one diamond and three clubs). If clubs are 3-2 you can make nine tricks easily.
How might you play clubs to best advantage?

2
How might you play in 3NT after this auction:

| South | North <br> $1 \Delta$ |
| :--- | :--- |
| 1NT | $3 N T$ |



Preliminary analysis.
Your Count and Plan reveals seven top tricks (one spade, two hearts, one diamond and three clubs). If clubs are 3-2 you can make nine tricks easily.

How might you play clubs to best advantage?

## ANSWERS

1How might you play in 3NT after this auction:

| South <br> $2 N T$ | North <br> $3 N T$ |
| :--- | :--- |


| South plays in 3NT. West leads the $\vee Q$. | $\begin{aligned} & \text { \& } 762 \\ & \vee 83 \\ & 974 \\ & \text { KQ932 } \end{aligned}$ |
| :---: | :---: |
|  |  |
|  | - AJ 84 <br> - AK 5 <br> - A 108 <br> \& A 106 |

Your Count and Plan shows nine winners on a 3-2 club break. You can pick up four clubs in the West hand, but only if you avoid blocking the clubs. To that end, you should win trick one and lead the 10 to the queen and return a low club to the ace. When East shows out you have a marked finesse of the

It is equally as good to cash the as the first play in the suit and then lead the ten on the second round, playing the queen when West refuses to cover. You can then return to hand with one of your many entries to take the marked club finesse. Here's the full deal:


Next answer overleaf

## ANSWERS

2
How might you play in 3NT after this auction:

| South | North |
| :--- | :--- |
|  | 1 1 |
| 1NT | $3 N T$ |



This may seem like a deal with an almost identical principle to Q1, but there is a subtle difference. Possession of the makes it possible to pick up a rare 5-0 split as well as the more mundane 4-1 splits.

Your Count and Plan shows nine winners on a 3-2 club break. You can pick up four clubs in the East hand, but only if you avoid
blocking the clubs. Your intention is to ensure that you unblock the 10 in similar vein to Q1 but here it is best play to cash the ${ }^{2} \mathrm{Q}$ at trick two, having won the first trick with the K .

If all followed suit, then you'd play the 10 at trick three to the K and, if West showed out, cross back to dummy in order to take the marked club finesse.

Here, on this lie of the cards, you can run the 10 at trick three leaving East with no defence. Here's the full deal:

HOW YOU play a suit will depend on:
\&the bidding (has someone pre-empted or shown a two suiter, do they need a card to justify their 1NT opening?);
\%how many tricks you need;
\&whether you need to play safely;
$\%$ if you have the entries to do what you want.

1On the following hands the opposition passed throughout the auctions. How do you tackle this combination?

- A Q 10752
- 98643

Playing a low spade to the ace is fractionally better than finessing the queen (52\%).

2How do you play this combination? Would you play it differently if you needed just four tricks, or if you needed all five tricks?

If you need all five tricks then finesse the queen. You have a $20 \%$ chance of success requiring the suit to break 2-2 with the king sat on your left. If you need four tricks then cashing the ace first and then playing low towards the queen gives you a $78 \%$ chance of success, catching a singleton king in East's hand. In a pairs game, playing for extra tricks, it may be better to take the finesse if your contract is likely to be reflected across the room, giving you an average of 3.92 tricks.


3
How do you play this combination?


If the suit breaks 3-2 (68\%) it will not matter in which order you play the ace, king and queen. However, if you take the ace and queen first you can also manage a 1-4 break if it is East that holds four spades to the jack (14\%). This is called retaining the finesse position. If West holds four spades there is no way to avoid a loser in the suit.

Playing the AQ first improves the chances of no losers in the suit to $82 \%$.

In each of the following hands, you are sitting South, and will face a problem that commonly goes awry for aspiring players. Imagine that you are playing in a teams match with IMPs scoring. You should make a plan to give yourself the best chance of making your contract, even if that means giving up on the possibility of making overtricks.


You are in 4V. West leads the 8. Plan your play.


You are in 6 . West leads the $\boldsymbol{\wedge}$ K. Plan your play.


You are in 7NT. West leads the $\mathbf{~ J}$. Plan your play.

Hand 4

- KJ1097
- Q 5
-A1054
- 17


You opened 1NT and partner transferred to spades. The auction ended in 49. West leads the 2. Plan
your play.
Answers overleaf


You are in $4 \boldsymbol{V}$. West leads the $\mathbf{8}$. Plan your play.

You have six top tricks (two spades, two hearts and two clubs). It is worth noting that despite having AKQ , you only have two winners in the suit since you have just two spades in each hand.
You are missing four hearts, so if they split 2-2, you will have the four extra tricks that you need if you simply draw trumps. However, if they split 3-1, you will need to make an extra trick. How can this be achieved?
One of the best ways to make extra tricks in a trump contract is to trump in the short trump hand, so it is worth checking if this could be possible in this case. Since dummy has only two diamonds and you have three diamonds, you can make an extra trick if you trump a diamond in the dummy. In order to reach this
goal, you will need to lose two rounds of diamonds whilst retaining at least one trump in the dummy, so it is crucial to start this process before playing any rounds of trumps.
You should therefore win trick one in either hand and lead a diamond. Say you win the first trick with the Q . You now lead the 2 which West wins with the - K and then returns the V to try to prevent you trumping in the dummy. However, you are one step ahead, so you win the $\mathrm{V}_{\mathrm{K}}$, then play the 6 . East can win with the $A$ and lead the $\geqslant 10$. You win the A and lead the $\$$. Trumping with dummy's $\$ 7$ gives you the extra trick that you need when the opposing hearts prove to be 3-1.


Hand 2

- 184
- AQ 6
- QJ 2
- 10963


You are in 6 . West leads the $\mathbf{\$}$ K. Plan your play.

You have six top tricks (one spade, three hearts and two clubs). You can make six extra tricks in trumps after you get rid of the A, so it looks tempting to win the first trick with the $\boldsymbol{A}$ and lead a diamond towards dummy's $\vee \mathrm{Q}$.

Can anything go wrong if you follow this approach?

When you play a diamond, the defender with the $A$ (in this case East), can win the $A$, and then return a spade to West's $\uparrow$ Q. Since you can only afford to lose one trick in your slam contract, this will lead to inevitable defeat. However, this is another example of a common situation in which it is advisable to delay drawing trumps. The best time to lose to the A will be when the defenders cannot win a trick with the $\stackrel{\varphi}{\mathrm{Q}}$.

This can only be achieved if you are able to void your hand (or the dummy) of spades without losing a trick in spades. It will require you to take the risk that you are able to play three rounds of hearts without an opponent trumping with a small trump, but it is a necessary risk if you are to have a chance to succeed.

You win the $\boldsymbol{A}$, and turn to hearts. To end up in the right hand at the right time, you lead the $\vee \mathrm{K}$ (highest card from the shorter length), then play the $\boldsymbol{V}_{4}$ to the Q followed by the $\vee \mathrm{A}$. You throw the $\$ 7$ on this trick, and when both opponents play a heart on this trick it is now safe to draw trumps. East can win the A and lead a spade but you can now trump this trick, and draw the last trump to make your slam.

continued overleaf

## Declarer Play Quiz - answers

Hand 3

- 12
- KQ 5
-K843
- AQ7 3

You are in 7NT. West leads the 5. Plan your play.

You have 11 top tricks (three spades, three hearts, two diamonds and three clubs). Despite having the AKQJ , you only have three winners in hearts, so you will need to make two extra tricks from clubs. This will be trivial most of the time, but will require a little care to cater for an unlikely, but manageable, uneven split.
You win trick one with the Q , and have to decide the best order to play your winning clubs. You are only missing four clubs, so if they split 2-2 or 3-1, it will be straightforward to win five club tricks, but what happens if they split 4-0?
Since you are missing the J 10 , you will need to keep two higher cards to beat those cards when they are played. It is therefore impossible to prevent East winning a trick if he holds
dra64. However, if West has the $\$ 11064$, then the $\$ 10$ ban be beaten by dummy's AQ. It is therefore crucial to win the first round of clubs with the K .

When you play the K, East discards a diamond, but you now lead the 2 . If West plays the 6 you can win with the so West will likely play the 10 . You beat this card with the and have to avoid following up with the A, since this would leave West's Jas a winning card. You therefore need to cross back to hand to lead the next club. Say you lead the $\mathbf{V}_{5}$ to the $\mathbf{V}$. You now play the 8 to give West an impossible problem. If he plays low, you win with the 8 then lead the to dummy's A. When you next return to your hand, you can cash the 5 to make your grand slam contract.

continued overleaf

Hand 4

- KJ1097
- Q 5
-A 1054
- 17


You opened 1NT and partner transferred to spades. The auction ended in 4 4 . West leads the 2. Plan your play.

You have eight top tricks (five spades, two diamonds and one club). With no sequential cards to promote by force, or high cards that can be promoted via a finesse, your extra tricks will have to be made by trumping. Should you therefore plan to trump hearts and/or clubs in the dummy, or diamonds in your hand?

For many players, this situation is very deceptive. If you usually think of trumping in the dummy as a good way to make extra tricks, then you will be tempted to trump hearts and/or clubs, but if you have been trained to recognise trumping in the short trump hand as a good way of making extra tricks then you will prefer to trump diamonds in your own hand.

A reason this can feel deceptive or confusing is that we are more used to dummy having fewer trumps than declarer. However, a
consequence of playing transfers is that the dummy will now become the long trump hand, so extra tricks will be made by trumping in your own (short trump) hand.

You should therefore win the first trick with the and immediately play on diamonds. You play the $\checkmark \mathrm{K}$ then cross to the $\checkmark$ A before leading the $\boldsymbol{5}$. You trump with the $\mathbf{~} 8$, and then need to get back to the dummy to trump another diamond. You can either lose a trick in clubs then trump a club in the dummy, or you can simply lead the Q to the $\boldsymbol{\omega} \mathrm{K}$ and then lead the 10 which you trump with the A . You will have now won the first six tricks, and will still have four winning trumps in the dummy. The defenders can win two tricks in hearts and one trick in clubs but you will win the 10 tricks required to make your game.


Defence is really, really hard. I should know, I defend badly all the time. Even though you can see dummy, just like declarer, it feels like you have far less information. You don't know what cards partner has and quite often you have to rely on instinct, rather than certainty.
Part of good defence is building good habits. And good habits need to be worked on. To help with that, I have compiled a list of four things you should always do when defending.

## How Many Points does dummy have?

As soon as dummy goes down, the first thing you should do is count dummy's points and add them to your own. The deck of cards contains four aces, kings, queens, and jacks and these add up to 40 total points.

If you know how many points are between you and dummy, you can figure out how many points partner and declarer have. And since declarer will have taken part in the bidding, you can usually figure out how many points partner has.

For example: If declarer opened 1NT showing 12-14, and you and dummy have 20 points, you can say with certainty that partner will have 6-8 points.

This may seem like a lot of effort, but I promise you that it's worth it. Knowing how many points partner has, even roughly, is so helpful. The more you know about the hand, the better your chances of defending well.

## What did Partner Lead?

Figuring out partner's plan when making the opening lead can help you to figure out what you should do in defence.

If partner led a low card, he has a good suit and you should consider continuing the suit if you win a trick. If he led a high card, he has a bad suit and you should consider looking elsewhere.

If partner led an honour, you can place him with the honour below, and declarer with the honour above (unless you can see it in dummy or your hand). Since you should be counting points, you can start to figure out many other points he can have. Conversely, if he doesn't lead an honour, you should assume that partner didn't have a strong sequence to lead from. Partner isn't going to lead a low card if he has KQJ in a suit.

## What IS DUMMY'S WEAKEST SUIT?

Identifying dummy's worst suit can be quite helpful, because it's probably the suit you should be playing. If you're lucky, declarer might also be weak in that suit and you can score some tricks. It's especially good to play dummy's weakest suit when declarer is on your left.


In this layout, with the 42 in dummy, a spade lead from East is very effective. Notice, it's not effective if West leads the suit. If dummy is on your left and you have a good holding, you should be wary of leading round to declarer. This is an example of why it is good to lead through strength and up to weakness.

## What SUIT IS DECLARER PLAYING?

If declarer wins the opening lead and starts playing on diamonds, you probably shouldn't play the same suit when you get in. Declarer should only be playing on suits where he hopes to establish tricks, or suits where he already has tricks.
As such, there is no future in any suit declarer plays himself and you should look elsewhere for your tricks.

## Round-UP FOR DEFENCE:

Remember, when you find yourself defending, keep these things in mind:
$\%$ How many points does dummy have, so how many might partner have?
$\%$ What did partner lead, and what did it say about their hand?
\& What is dummy's weakest suit?
\& What suit is declarer playing on?

## Diary Reminder

Please remember: if you have sufficient magazine points (from playing in affiliated games) you can receive a free diary with the September issue of English Bridge, but you will need to positively opt in (if you have not already done this). If you do not have enough points you can become a Direct EBU Member and qualify for a diary regardless of how often you play (see below). The deadline for opting in is 19th August 2021.

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## The Abysmal Leads

We normally refer to 'the lead' as the first card played, but most leads that are abysmal as an initial card, remain abysmal at the start of any trick.

## Low from ace against a suit contract

Is there really any lead worse than underleading an ace against a suit contract? Your opponents are playing in a trump suit because they want to ruff things. As such, they may very well have a singleton. If you underlead your ace, declarer may score his king and then never lose another trick in the suit if one hand had a singleton.

## Unsupported honours

What exactly is an unsupported honour?
\& A 976

- Q 5
- K 75

Q 432
Leading any of the honours, rather than a low card, would count as an unsupported honour because you lack the honour beneath it.

Common wisdom says that you should lead fourth highest from your longest and strongest - particularly in no trumps. A wise mantra that has served many people well over the years. All too often I see people leading the honour itself. This frequently loses a trick, even towards the end of the hand.

Against suit contracts, people tend to lead unsupported aces because they have been taught (very wisely) not to underlead aces. But don't do this. It really isn't a good idea. Find a different suit to lead and wait patiently for your ace to score a trick, and hopefully 'catch a king'.

## Declarer's suit

It's common knowledge that you should lead the unbid suit, but if there's one suit you should avoid at all costs, it's declarer's suit. This is any suit that declarer has bid and the reasons not to lead the suit are numerous.

For a start, if declarer has the suit, it's unlikely that you'll be scoring many tricks there. The more cards he has in the suit, the
less chance you have of building your own tricks. This is true of any suit bid by the opponent's, but it is especially true of declarer's suit because it is the suit on your right. It would be much better to lead dummy's suit if given the choice.


If declarer (South) has bid spades, a spade lead is very likely to cost. Your $\mathbf{4}$ (4th best) will run round to declarer's queen which they can only score if you lead the suit. If you lead the suit bid on your left:

| ¢ AQ 32 |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| ¢K10865 |  | - J 9 |
|  | - 74 |  |

This time, a spade lead costs nothing. Declarer can take the finesse if they want, but they always could.

Obviously, you would prefer to lead an unbid suit. If that isn't possible, always lead dummy's suit before you lead declarer's.

## When to lead a trump

There's an old saying: When in doubt lead a trump. It isn't a very good saying, since there should never be any doubt in our minds. Here are the clear examples of when to lead a trump:
Against a Grand Slam
We usually lead suits in the hope that we might establish a trick. If we lead from a king and partner has the queen, our king is established. When we later get in, we can cash our newly established winner. But against a grand slam, such a plan is silly because we only need to score one trick.

Our lead, therefore, should be as safe as possible. Your opponents won't play in a grand slam unless their trumps are ironclad, so a trump lead will be perfectly safe. And if you're lucky, you might prevent a ruff in the dummy.
When partner passes your take-out double If partner passes your take-out double (converting it into a penalty double), he
should have good trumps and enough points to defeat the contract. The only way the opponents can make their contract is if they can trump their losers. Lead a trump to cut down on ruffing. Your partner should also lead trumps later on in the play, and because his trumps are good, partner might even be able to draw trumps entirely.
When declarer plays in their second suit What exactly is a second suit? It isn't something with holes in the back of the wardrobe - it's something like this:


In this auction, diamonds are trumps, and they were declarer's second suit. They were the second suit he bid and dummy agreed them by passing. On an auction like this, where the second suit is agreed, you should always lead a trump.

Dummy didn't show preference to hearts, so he may have a singleton. As soon as declarer gets in, he will try to ruff his hearts in the dummy. But if you lead a trump and continue leading trumps whenever you get in, you can stop that.
And when I say always lead a trump, I mean it. Even from something like KJx, you should lead a low trump after such an auction.

Second suit agreed, a trump is what you lead.
You see, it must be good advice. It rhymes.

## ABYSMAL LEADS

Low from an ace against a suit contract

> Unsupported honours
> Declarer's suit

WHEN TO LEAD A TRUMP
Against a grand slam
When partner passes a take-out double When declarer plays in his second suit

## Leads Quiz

ou are sitting West. Choose your leads on the following three hands:


Choose from: (a) 3; (b) A/K; (c) 3; (d) 4


|  | South | West | North | East |
| :---: | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
|  | $1 \mathrm{NT}^{1}$ | Pass | 3NT | All Pass |
| $112-14$ |  |  |  |  |

Choose from: (a) a spade; (b) $\vee_{\mathrm{K}}$; (c) 4; (d) 10


| South | West | North | East |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 14 | Pass | 1NT | 2 |
| 24 | Pass | 34 | Pass |
| 49 | All Pass |  |  |

Choose from: (a) 4 ; (b) ; (c) Q; (d) 5


Choose from: (a) 3; (b) A/K; (c) 3; (d)

## ANSWER

(a) 3: 1 mark. This is a horrible lead. You are extremely likely to make your Q . . . unless you lead the suit.
(b) $\vee \mathrm{A} / \mathrm{K}: 10$ marks. The late, great US Pairs player Barry Crane used to say that 'When God deals you an AK, it is because they do not want you to have a lead problem'. Like all bridge sayings, it is not $100 \%$ true, but this one is as close as it comes. There is also a technical point here. Whatever your leading methods, it is sensible to play that one of the ace or king asks for count and the other for attitude (that is for partner to signal whether they have the queen or not). It does not matter much which way you play it, but you should
agree with your regular partner which is which. Sometimes one is important and sometimes the other.
(c) 3: 4 marks. Well I suppose this could be right, but it is very unlikely, and requires much more in partner's hand than leading a top heart.
(d) 4:2 marks. Playing for a ruff here is highly unlikely to work. Firstly, it probably needs partner to hold the AK as otherwise declarer will just get in and draw trumps, and is that really likely when you already hold an 11 count? Secondly, even if you get your ruff, you are now most unlikely to make your $\boldsymbol{\perp}$, so you have not actually gained anything.
ou are sitting West. Choose your lead:


Choose from: (a) a spade; (b) V ; (c) 4; (d) 10

## ANSWER

(a) a spade: 6 marks. Well, responder does not seem interested in majors, so partner may well have a few cards in one or both of them. This would be my second choice, but a long way below a diamond.
(b) $\vee$ K: 1 mark. This is a real wild lead and highly unlikely to be correct. Parter will find it impossible to read as well. If you going to lead from this holding, the three is the correct card.
(c) 4: 10 marks. Leading your longest suit against NTs has a lot going for it, and here I would look no further than your good diamond suit. You may simply be cashing the
suit out or may be setting it up by knocking out declarer's one stopper and then getting in with the $\vee$ K to cash them. And yes, you should lead low from this holding even though you hold the KQ. Yes, sometimes declarer will have a holding like AJ doubleton and you will have given away a trick. But many other times partner will have a holding like Ax or Jx and the lead of the king will block the suit. If you had KQ1043 the K would be the right lead, but not here.
(d) 10: 3 marks. Well partner may have a good club suit, but why guess partner's suit when you have a good suit of your own?

## Leads Answers



```
Hand 3
4 J75
\ K6
- QJ643
-52
```

| South | West | North | East |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| 1 | Pass | $1 N T$ | $2 \boldsymbol{~}$ |
| $2 \boldsymbol{~}$ | Pass | $3 \boldsymbol{~}$ | Pass |
| 4 | All Pass |  |  |

Choose from: (a) 5; (b) 『K; (c) Q; (d) 5

## ANSWER

(a) 5: 4 marks. You lead trumps in order to cut down ruffs. Here declarer has lots of trumps and dummy is likely to be as short in spades as anything else. It could be right, but it is against the odds.
(b) マK: 10 marks. Generally it is a very bad idea to lead unsupported kings, particularly against suit contracts. But partner has bid hearts. It is highly likely that partner has the ace and likely that you will need to cash these tricks fast. If it goes really well you may even get a ruff! Leading partner's suit tends to make them happy, and making partner happy is one of the skills in bridge - they will play better then!
(c) Q: 6 marks. Without partner's bid I may have led this. But partner did bid and so you
should be guided by that. Anyway, you do not want the old comment that 'If I had bid diamonds presumably you would have led a heart' thrown at you do you? On hand 2 I told you to lead low from a KQ and here I say lead the top from a QJ. Why the difference? The difference is simply that this is a suit contract and hand 2 was a NT contract. Defending no trumps is largely a race to set up your winners in a suit before declarer sets up their winners, and it often pays to give up a trick in a suit to set up several. But defending against suits is about not giving away tricks and making your high cards in each suit. There is no point setting up several long cards in a suit as declarer will just ruff them.
(d) 25: 2 marks. If you want to try for a ruff, the suit partner bid is the place to try...

With the prospect of going back to the club room in the not-toodistant future, Robin Barker guides us through the whys and wherefores of alerting, using the stop card and announcing when playing face-to-face bridge.

## Alerting - why and how

Bidding in duplicate bridge has always employed conventions - bids (and doubles) that don't mean what they say. Partnerships can have agreements about a wide range of meanings of bids. Different partnerships have different agreements and the spirit of the game (and the laws of the game) require that you make sure your opponents know what your bids mean.
The obvious way would be for the player who makes a bid which has a special meaning to wave at the opponents and say something. This would tell the opponents what is going on but it would also remind partner - and too often partner may have
forgotten and will be tipped off. So, this is not what we do.
Instead it has to be the partner of the bidder who waves the 'Alert' card, or knocks the table or says 'Alert!'. If the opponents want to understand the special meaning of the bid, they can (at their turn) ask the partner of the bidder who will explain the partnership agreement.
There are rules on what bids and doubles should be alerted but you won't go far wrong if you alert bids that do not say what they mean, and alert doubles which are not take-out (a double is take-out when it asks partner to bid).

For example, lets look at this auction:


North/South understand 2 is Fourth Suit Forcing - it is forcing partner to bid again and does not show diamonds - there
may be no values in diamonds. Without any agreement, 2 would show South's second suit, so the North/South agreement is something East/West should be told about. South makes no special emphasis when bidding 2 , but North alerts. It is West's turn to call and West can ask 'What is $2 \downarrow$ ?' and North replies 'Fourth Suit Forcing asking me to describe my hand - may not have diamonds' or whatever is the North/South understanding.
Alerting does not always work. If one side disagree about the meaning of a bid, or don't have an agreement, the opponents may not be told the right thing. The director can sort this out at the end of the auction, or the end of the hand - depending on whether it was the declaring side or the defending side who got things wrong.
If you make a bid which partner alerts, and the explanation is different to what you meant, you must keep a poker face. Partner is not entitled to know you misbid, or he misread it.

## Announcing - Why, When \& How

Announcements are a procedure that combine alerting and explaining. Announcements occur only for some opening bids and for some responses to NT opening bids. The concept is quite new (compared to alerting) - being introduced this century.

The idea is that some bids are almost always asked about and to avoid problems in almost-always-asking, a short explanation is given before the question is asked.

The most obvious example is when a 1NT opening bid shows a balanced hand of a defined range. Partner of the 1NT bidder says ' 12 to 14 ' (or ' 15 to 17 ' or whatever is the defined range). This has the effect of answering the most likely question about the opening bid. If the opponents have other questions they can still ask.

Stayman and simple transfer responses to 1 NT are announced: $2 \boldsymbol{2}$ - partner says 'Stayman', 2 - partner says 'Hearts', 2 - partner says 'Spades'.

Opening two-level bids are announced if they are natural: 'weak', 'intermediate', 'strong'; but two-level bids which do not show the suit are alerted, not announced. An opening $1 \mathbf{1 8}$ or 1 is announced if it is not forcing but could be short.

If you think the opponents have forgotten to announce (or alert) you can ask anyway.

## Skip-Bid warning - Stop!

Bridge is a thinking game (a mind sport). If there were no need to think, we would just bid and play the hands by rote. But thinking can pass information: it tells partner and opponents that you have something to think about.

The skip-bid warning (the 'Stop' procedure) is designed to reduce the problems of revealing pauses in the bidding by requiring a pause after a jump bid, even if the next player has nothing to think about.

The procedure is that when a player makes a jump bid (including an opening bid above 1 NT ), they display the 'STOP' card and leave it on the table. The next player does not bid while the 'STOP' card is on the table, and should think about their bid - including asking questions. When there has been a pause of ten seconds, the original bidder picks up the 'STOP' card, and the next player can bid.

The 'STOP' card is controlled by the original bidder (who has nothing else to do), leaving the next player free to concentrate on their choice of bid.

If the next player has nothing to think about, they should wait (but not look like they are waiting) before bidding/passing - so no one can tell they had nothing to think about.


One thing that lockdown has shown us is that there are more ways to learn and improve your bridge than we ever dreamed of. That said, our keen teachers are getting ready to offer face to face lessons as soon as practicable, although many will continue to offer online as well as classroom-based lessons. Our own EBED teachers directory can help you find a teacher near you who is a member of the English Bridge Teachers Association (EBTA).

If you have friends that would like to learn, please direct them to our website page detailing ways to learn. http://ebedcio.org.uk/learn. If you would like to benefit from lessons to improve your bridge you can find a local teacher through https://www.ebu.co.uk/directory.
Enter your postcode to find a teacher near you.

As well as showing the teacher's contact information, you will also see their membership level. Here is a quick guide.

## Professional

Our highest teacher grade is Professional. These are very experienced bridge teachers who also hold a bridge directing qualification. Some may also provide training for our new teachers.

## Full members

Our Full members have all completed our EBED teacher training and followed this up with further assessment and observation.

## Associate members

Our Associate membership is open to anyone with an interest in teaching bridge. These members, may have undertaken some training (where 'club teacher' is shown on the directory record), but their teaching experience is unconfirmed. It may include some assistant teachers.

## "Relaxed" Games on BBO



Join the EBED " 6 -high Relaxed Games" on Bridge Base Online

Every Wednesday and Friday at 2pm - only \$3

Specifically for players with an NGS no higher than a 6, these games are run with experienced teachers to hand, with a Zoom discussion afterwards. If you are in need of a partner, please let us know and we will help.

To enter, or for more information: Jacqueline@ebedcio.org.uk

## "Relaxed" Games on BBO

Join the EBU daily " 9 -high
Relaxed Games" on Bridge Base
Online, at 11am or 7.30pm

## 12-board games only \$2

These games are for players without too much experience, with an NGS no higher than 9, and run at a slower pace than our other regular daily games.

To enter, or for more information: www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/events-less-experienced-players or Tel: 01296317203

Both the English Bridge Union and English Bridge Education and Development are offering games for progressing players (Under 6 and Under 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 before clubs reopen - nothing improves play as much as playing! BBO\$ are best bought directly through the website (Paypal or card). Using the BBO app often costs more. Here are some testimonials from players who recently took part in an Under-6 tournament:

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 U9 and U6 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. Kerry Roach - Corsham

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.

Kerry Roach - Corsham
Ref Under 9 and Under 6 events: These team 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!

Sarah Miller - Warminster

* for details of the NGS see page 60

TThe Master Point Scheme is run by the EBU. Master Points are awarded for finishing in 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 MyEBU.

## 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. It can be seen here.

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. Details are here.

## 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 p53), 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 'Two' through to 'Ace'. The Ace category is then subdivided, with only very few players reaching 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 1000 , your grade is considered to be 'evolving.' Once you have played 1000 boards
you have a 'mature' grade. Your grade (between 0 \& 100) represents the percentage score it is estimated you would achieve if you 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. They are dispelled at:
www.ebu.co.uk/documents/miscellaneous/ngs/clark-article.pdf

##  0

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

