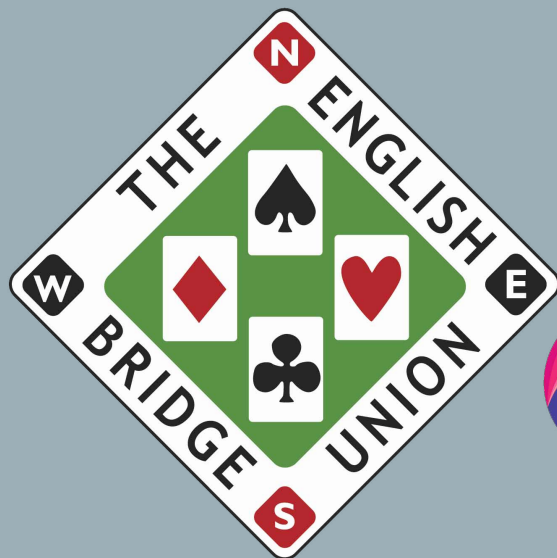


# DISCOVERY

EXPERT TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR CLUB BRIDGE SCORES

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## DISCOVERY

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Welcome to the second 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.

*Lou Hobhouse, Editor*

## CONTENTS

### Bidding

Shaded pre-empts – Sarah Bell	4
Coping with pre-empts – Ron Klinger	9
Double first, explain later – Michael Byrne	15
5-3-3-2 hands – Freddie North	17
Club Bidding Quiz – Julian Pottage	19

### Fiction

Naughty coups – Simon Cochemé	22
-------------------------------	----

### Declarer Play

Take a top trick first – Paul Bowyer	24
An unnecessary finesse – Paul Bowyer	27
Drawing trumps – Harold Schogger	30
Declarer play quiz – David Bakhshi	36
BBO Bridge Master – Paul Sutton	41

### Defence

Leads in Pairs – Stephen Kennedy	43
Leads Quiz – Alan Mould	47
Suit Preference Signals – Heather Dhondy	51
Holding up an ace – David Bird	54

### Alerting & Announcing

Questions for the director – Robin Barker	61
---	----

### Did you know?

Keeping Partner Happy	64
Journey of a Bridge Player	65
What is a handicapped event?	66
Games for progressing players	67
EBED Teachers Directory – Lorna Watson	68
Master Points unravelled	69
National Grading Scheme	70
Best Behaviour @ Bridge	71



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Lots of players use weak twos and higher level pre-empts as part of their bidding armoury. I want to look at how you can approach unusual hands: ones that are a bit too strong or weak for a pre-empt, or that have an awkward second suit. I'm only going to talk about first and second seat pre-empts, as the rules are a bit different once your partner is a passed hand.

**I'M OUT OF RANGE FOR A PRE-EMPT BUT MY HAND SEEMS SUITABLE FOR ONE. WHAT SHOULD I DO?**

A good rule for pre-empting is that you can be a bit light in terms of points if your hand is particularly suitable, but you should only rarely be over-

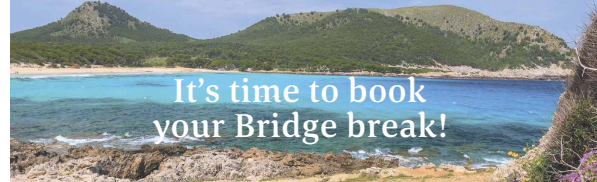
strength. The range for a weak two opening is 5-9 points, so I will occasionally open one with a four-count if the hand looks particularly suitable, but almost never with 10 points. A 'suitable looking' hand might be one with a fantastic suit (KJ10987 is a great four-point suit, A65432 is not) or with extra shape, such as having a singleton, particularly if that singleton is in a major. Hands with 6-4 shape are particularly powerful, and I am keen to bid on hands with a good six-card major and a four-card minor.

The reason that you cannot open a weak two with 10 or 11 points is that you are just too likely to miss a game when partner does not realise how strong you are. Think logically.

*Continued overleaf*

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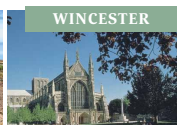
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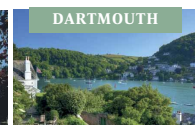
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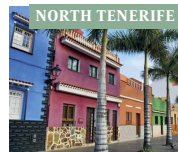


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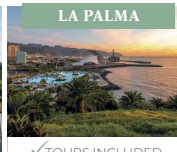
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FROM ARENA TRAVEL





Compare these two hands:

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

You would open 1NT holding Hand 1, a pretty uninspiring 12 count. Hand 2 has more playing strength than most weak NT hands so it makes no sense to treat it as weak. Hands with a good six-card suit and 10 points should be opened at the one level. This isn't being a bit aggressive or naughty – it is a fair reflection of their worth.

Many players apply the rule of 19 when deciding whether to open at the one level, which states that you should add your

number of points to the lengths of your two longest suits. If that number is greater than or equal to 19 you can open. In the example given, you have 10 points and your longest two suits are of six and three cards respectively.  $10 + 6 + 3 = 19$ , so you can open 1. If I've been doing my job well you already know that blanket rules like this should never be taken as gospel, but I do think that this rule is broadly sensible, especially when the quality of the longest suit is good. If the suit is very bad, it's a bit different because that will significantly impact the playing strength of the hand.

When I first started to play, I was given a different blanket rule: that there is no hand that is too strong for a weak two and

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too weak for a one-level opening. This too, I find broadly sensible, as long as you appreciate that it is possible for a hand to be unsuitable for a weak two without being too strong, as a

weak two opening does not simply show any hand with 5-9 points and a six-card suit – it shows a hand that really wants to play in a certain suit.

*Continued overleaf*

If a hand has scattered rather than concentrated values, poor residual shape, and poor suit quality, it might be unsuitable for a weak two opening even if it is appropriate in terms of high card strength, such as Hand 3.

Hand 3	
♠	9 7 6 4 3 2
♥	K 2
♦	J 4
♣	Q 6 5

To give a stronger example, Hand 4 is too weak for a one-level opening, even though it fits the rule of 19 (that spade suit is shocking, and almost all of its points are in the two short suits. This hand is not worth 10 points) but it is not too strong for a weak two, it's unsuitable. It is not a hand that wants to hang its hat on the spade suit, which is the type of hand that a pre-empt shows.

Hand 4	
♠	9 7 6 4 3 2
♥	K Q
♦	Q J
♣	Q 6 5

As always, position and vulnerability matter. If you are vulnerable, you need a better suit to pre-empt, as you will concede a large penalty if you are doubled, and opponents will be keener to double you. You can also shade your pre-empts more in first

seat than in second, because you are pre-empting two opponents and one partner.

## I HAVE A SECOND SUIT ON THE SIDE, CAN I STILL PRE-EMPT?

The short answer to this question is 'it depends on the length and quality of your suits'. If your second suit is a four-card minor and you have a vaguely decent 6+ card suit you should absolutely bid. This sort of shape can even be a reason to open at the three level rather than the two level if you are not vulnerable.

You have to be a bit more careful when your side suit is a major. This is because, if partner holds that major too, you might make game in that suit, and that's going to be harder to bid if you pre-empt. If your second suit is a minor it is unlikely that you can make game in the minor, and if you can partner will probably bid the suit anyway.

This might sound like a contradiction: 'it's hard for partner to bid your side major but if you are making game in your side minor partner will bid it', but it isn't. Partner won't

need as much in your side major to make game as they need in your side minor, because a major suit game is a level lower than a minor suit game. The necessary number of trumps is key here – if you are going to make five of a minor, you usually want to have nine or more trumps between you. If you have four, partner will need at least five so can bid the suit with a good hand. Four of a major, on the other hand, can often be made with a 4-4 fit or a poor quality 5-4 fit, and partner won't introduce a four-card or bad five-card suit over a weak two.

*Continued overleaf*

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Hands which are 7-4 are a little different to 6-4 hands. If you have a great seven-card suit it is very likely that it should be trumps, so you can be a little less concerned about holding a weak four card major. If, on the other hand, your four-card major is pretty good and your seven-card suit is weak, you might be more concerned about missing your major suit fit so might lean more towards passing.

Here are some hands to have a think about. What, if anything, would you open on them?

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

## ANSWERS

**Hand 1** – Open 1♥. You have 10 points, which is too much for a weak two, but your great suit and good shape make this worth a one-level opening.

**Hand 2** – Pass. The poor suit and singleton king mean that this isn't really worth 10 points, but it's not pure enough (translation: focused enough on hearts) to be suitable for a pre-empt either. I'd pass and overcall at the one level later if the opportunity arose.

**Hand 3** – Open 1♦. You will then be able to rebid 1♠ if partner responds in hearts, and you'll have conveyed your hand well. This hand is too strong for a weak two in diamonds, and that four-card spade suit also makes it unsuitable.

**Hand 4** – Pass. You have uninspiring diamonds and a decent four-card major on the side, so a pre-empt could result in you playing in 2♦ with 4♠ cold.

**Hand 5** – Pass. Your spades are good enough but the four-card heart suit makes this unsuitable for a pre-empt. Again, I'd hope to come into the auction later if I could.

**Hand 6** – Open 2♥. You are pretty perfect for it! If I were first in hand at favourable vulnerability, I would open 3♥. My singleton is in spades, which makes a higher pre-empt more appealing (don't let the opponents bid 2♠!) and a 6-4 shape is generally powerful. Vulnerable, however, I want to have a seven-card suit to open at the three level so this would get 2♥ from me. □



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These days bridge players are very aggressive in the bidding with shapely hands and you and your partner need a strategy, or method, for dealing with the opposition's weak two openings and higher-level pre-empts. Here is a suggestion for regular duplicate players.

## AFTER THEY OPEN A WEAK TWO

You can treat the situation as though the bidding has started with a one-opening. This means that (2♥)-**Double** is for take-out, just like (1♥)-**Double** is for take-out, with a shortage in the suit opened and support for the unbid suits. A take-out double is also used for balanced hands which have 19 points or more.

Just as (1♠)-1NT = 15-18 points, a balanced hand and with at least one stopper in their suit, so (2♠)-2NT is 15-18 points, balanced, with at least one stopper in the opposition's suit.

One significant difference between bidding after a weak two opening compared to a one-level opening is the overcall. After a one-opening, it is fine to overcall at the one level with a strong five-card suit and 8+ HCP. After a weak two opening, an overcall at the two or three level should be based on a strong five-card or longer suit, but the hand should have equivalent values as for an opening bid, so 12+ HCP.

## ADVANCED ACTION FOR BIG GAINS

If you're feeling ready for an exciting system upgrade, you can play 'Leaping Michaels', used by many top players. A jump to 4♣ or 4♦ over the opponents' weak two shows 5+ cards in an unbid major and 5+ cards in the minor suit bid. For example:

(2♠)-4♣ = clubs + hearts;  
 (2♠)-4♦ = diamonds + hearts;  
 (2♥)-4♣ = clubs + spades;  
 (2♥)-4♦ = diamonds + spades;  
 (2♦)-4♦ = 5+ hearts and 5+ spades;  
 (2♦)-4♣ = clubs and a major: partner's 4♦

reply asks for the major suit.

The strength expected for a Leaping Michaels bid is a five-loser hand or better with decent quality suits. It is recommended that Leaping Michaels is played as forcing.

## QUIZ TIME

Your right-hand opponent has opened 2♥, described as weak, with six hearts and 6-10 points. What do you call with each of these hands?

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

Answers overleaf

## ANSWERS

Your right-hand opponent has opened 2♥, described as weak, with six hearts and 6-10 points. What do you call with each of these hands?

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

**Double** – you would have doubled if the opponents had opened 1♥, so you have a perfect double over 2♥. You are short in the opposition's suit, and have support in the other three suits, and an opening hand.

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

2♠ – you have a good quality suit and opening values.

Hand 3	
♠	A J 8
♥	K Q 2
♦	K 3
♣	K J 8 6 3

2NT – Here you would have overcalled 1NT if the opponents had started 1♥, so you can overcall 2NT over their 2♥ opening. You would expect to have a double stop in hearts with the ace on your right.

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

3♠ – you have a good quality suit and opening values. The jump overcall after a weak two shows a strong 6+ card suit and an opening hand of about 12-16 points and six losers. Never pre-empt with a weak hand over a weak pre-empt.

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

**Dble** – you want to be in a minimum 3NT contract as you have nine tricks almost guaranteed, and a heart stop. However, there's time to double first as there could be slam with partner holding just the ♠K and the ♦K. Keep your options open for another round. Double followed by a bid in a new strain (3NT or 4♣) shows a very strong hand.

Hand 6	
♠	A K J 6 5
♥	3
♦	K Q J 9 7
♣	J 7

2♠ or 4♦ – if you are playing natural methods you would bid 2♠ to show your good quality spade suit and opening values. If you are playing Leaping Michaels you can bid 4♦ to show at least 5-5 in diamonds and spades (the unbid major).

*Higher pre-empt overleaf*



## AFTER THEY OPEN A PRE-EMPTIVE 3X

You have far less room after a pre-emptive three-level bid, so the range of the calls left to use becomes much wider.

You can bid 3NT with a balanced hand, a stopper in their suit and 15+ points, but the range becomes 15-21 points. With 22+ points start with a take-out double. The 15-21 points is a very wide range, but the opponents have robbed you of the space to differentiate between the minimum balanced hands for a no trump overcall and the stronger ones.

An overcall at the three level shows a strong 5+ card suit, a good opening hand, and five to six losers in the direct seat (immediately after the opening bid), but seven losers or fewer in the pass-out seat. The difference is because, in the direct seat, the partner of the opener may be strong. Once they have passed, the pass-out seat can be braver.

Double is for take-out and should have the ideal shape: short in the suit opened, good opening hand, support (4+ cards) or tolerance (three cards) for the unbid suits. It is recommended to have a six-loser hand or better in the direct seat, while a seven-loser hand or better will do in the pass-out seat.

A jump to 4♥ or 4♠ over a cheaper three-level bid shows a long, strong suit, usually a powerful 6+ card suit with at least three of the four top honours and, overall, a five-loser hand or better.

A bid of 4NT over a 3♥/3♠ opening is not played as Blackwood, but shows a hand with both minors, at least 5-5 with good quality suits, and four losers or fewer. Partner gives preference.

## QUIZ TIME

Your right-hand opponent has opened with a 3♦ pre-empt. What would you do with:

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

*Answers overleaf*

## QUIZ TIME

Your right-hand opponent has opened with a 3♦ pre-empt. What would you do with:

### Hand 1

♠ A J 8 3  
♥ K Q J  
♦ K Q 3  
♣ Q J 2

**3NT** – This shows a balanced hand, 15-21 points with stops in the opposition suit. With a long major, partner can still choose to bid 4♥ or 4♠, or explore slam if strong enough.

### Hand 2

♠ A J 6 3  
♥ K Q J 5  
♦ 7 4  
♣ A K 7

**Double** – In the direct seat this shows 16+ points and at least tolerance (three cards) in the unbid suits.

### Hand 3

♠ A Q J 8 6 5  
♥ 5 2  
♦ A K 3  
♣ 6 3

**3♠** – An overcall at the three level shows a strong 5+ card suit, a good opening hand, and five to six losers in the direct seat.

### Hand 4

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

**4♠** – This shows a long (six plus), strong suit, with at least three of the four top honours and a five-loser hand or better.

### Hand 5

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

**4♦** – bidding the opposition suit asks partner to pick a major. You are showing a hand with five or fewer losers and at least 5-5 in the majors

### Hand 6

♠ A K Q J 9 5  
♥ K Q J 10 7 6 2  
♦ –  
♣ –

**6♦** – You are saying that you have enough for a slam in one of the majors. Partner is asked to bid 6♥ with preference for hearts and 6♠ with preference for spades. You are also praying that partner does not pass 6♦ out of fright!

It is true that you have only 16 HCP, but you have just one loser. It would be very unlucky if you went down in 6♥ or 6♠. If partner holds the ♥A, it would be a clever move to bid 7♥ or 7♠. If you can afford to bid 6♦ missing the ♥A, then that card must be enough for the partnership to have a grand slam available.

*Higher pre-empts overleaf*

## AFTER A 4-LEVEL OPENING OR 5♣/5♦

At such a high level, bidding is often a matter of guesswork. You have so little room to explore the right spot for your side.

After (4♣) or (4♦), a double is take-out, while an overcall shows a strong suit, usually five losers or fewer.

After (4♥) or (4♠) the double is still take-out while 4NT is minors. Bidding game in an unbid suit shows a strong suit and strong hand, with five losers or fewer.

Some play that after (4♥) a double is take-out, while after (4♠) a double simply shows a very strong hand, asking partner to bid with a 6+ card suit or pass for penalties. You and partner must agree on which doubles are for take-out and which are primarily for penalties (winners in opener's suit and a strong hand as well). The former hand types are more frequent. Most top players play double is for take-out up to and including 4♠.

Defending against pre-empts can be all about making the best guess. Let's take a look at an example. What would you call with South's hand here:

♠ K 3 2				
♥ 3				
♦ A				
♣ A K J 10 9 8 7 3				
	W	N	E	S
	Pass	Pass	2♥	?

The deal arose in the 2022 World Championships, held in Salsomaggiore, Italy. In the Venice Cup (the Women's Teams), Poland's South bid 5♣, a very sensible choice. South has four losers and 15 HCP. West was a passed hand and East opened with a weak two showing 6-10 points. Let's give East, say, eight points. With our 15 that leaves 17 for West and North. The best guess is that our partner has about half, eight or nine points. That

equates to two to three tricks. No guarantees, but if partner can produce the right two tricks (♠AQ, or ♠A + ♥A or ♠A + ♦K or ♠QJ + ♥A, etc) 5♣ will make. Indeed, one trick from partner might be enough if partner has one or two clubs and the clubs split kindly.

In fact, partner held:

♠ 9 7 5 4
♥ Q 7 2
♦ K Q 5
♣ Q 6 2

A heart lead by West from ♥K95 to East's ace, and a spade back (West had ♠AQ) would have defeated 5♣. However, for reasons unknown, West chose a club lead. South won, drew West's other club, cashed the ♦A, crossed to the ♣Q and pitched two losers on the ♦KQ, 11 tricks, North-South +400. □





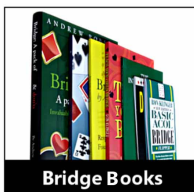
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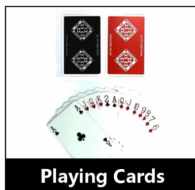
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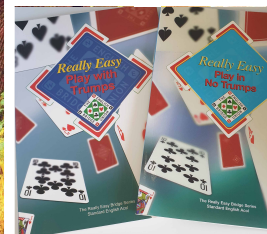
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The take-out double is something that is vital and we use all the time, but it is easy to forget that the most frequently occurring type of hand we have for a take-out double, is not the only type of hand we might have.

When we make a take-out double of a one level opening bid we are showing either:

- A) A three suited hand with shortage in the opponent's suit (S) Opening values (O) and support (S) for all three unbid suits (SOS). This can mean a dull 4-4-3-2 shape, or sometimes even flatter (if we are doubling a minor);
- B) A good balanced hand that is too strong to overcall 1NT, 19+ points; or
- C) A good hand with a long suit that is too strong for a simple overcall at the lowest level, 17+ points.

This first category comes up by far the most often, at a frequency rate of something like 90%. For every 20 take-out doubles you make, 18 of them will be category A.

The other 10% is made up of categories B and C and that is what we are going to look at here. Even though they are not that common, they are very costly when we get them wrong.

Imagine you hold the following hands and the player on your right opens 1♦:

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

All of these hands are suitable for a take-out double, falling under either category B or C.

**Hand 1** has a chunky 19 count with huge strength in both majors. There is a very

real danger that if you overcall 1♠ on such a hand then it will be passed out, only for you to discover later on that 4♥ is cold. For example if partner has something like this hand:

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

They would pass your 1♠ overcall like a shot, only to discover 4♥ is a trivial make. (In fact 6♥ has a theoretical chance, although we would save that for when we were desperate!)

The correct call is to double and then bid spades if partner responds in clubs. (If partner responds in hearts you can support of course). A double followed by a change of suit shows a hand that couldn't overcall as it was too strong, starting somewhere at the 17 mark.

*continued overleaf*

## Hand 2

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

**Hand 2** looks perfect for an overcall of 1NT – until you count the points. Holding 20 you are far too strong as partner will pass with five or six and an easy game will be missed. You should start with a double and then rebid in NT whatever your partner says – 1NT if they say 1♥ or 1♠, and 2NT if they say 2♣. This shows the next step up, 19-20 points and a balanced hand with a diamond stop, and partner will know how to continue.

## Hand 3

♠ 7  
♥ A K 8 6  
♦ A 9  
♣ A K J 9 7 3

**Hand 3** is very difficult as your singleton is in spades, not diamonds where you would like it. Regardless you have to start with a double. An overcall of 2♣ would be right on a weaker hand, but again if you

bid it then you might well miss a game – not to mention a slam!

Start with a double and then rebid in clubs to show this sort of hand – a strong hand (17+ points) that couldn't overcall 2♣ as it held too many values. Note that if partner has a very poor hand with a long spade suit, he should start by keeping the bidding low, and then jump in spades at his next go.

## Hand 4

♠ K Q J 9  
♥ Q  
♦ A Q J  
♣ A J 8 3 2

**Hand 4** is another tricky hand as it falls between two stools. Holding 20 high card points it is too strong for any action other than double, but your bid on the next round is awkward. A rebid of clubs would suggest this strength but a more clubs-orientated hand. As usual you should let your general bridge judgement

guide you, and treat it as a balanced hand. Double and then bid no trumps if partner responds in hearts (they always do) is as good a description as you can manage.

## Hand 5

♠ A K Q J 9 7 4  
♥ A J 8  
♦ A 2  
♣ 7

**Hand 5** is a very strong hand and your first thought is to bid 4♠, but that is not the best description of your hand. You are enormously strong in both controls and playing strength, and if you start with 4♠ there is a very real danger you will miss a slam. Start with a double, and if nothing exciting happens bid 4♠ at your next go. If partner responds by jumping, or doing something else to show strength (1NT or a cue bid of the opponent's suit for example) then you can jump in spades and reveal your true colours. □

## The Dos and Don'ts of doubling with good hands

- Do** count your points carefully and show the correct range for the hand type you have.
- Do** plan your rebid if you are doubling first and explaining your hand type later on.

- Don't** overcall if there is a very real danger that partner might pass and a game contract will be missed.
- Don't** overcall the first thing you think of – it is fine to double and show your suit later, there will always be more bidding.

*Continued overleaf*



**Game All. Dealer East. Pairs**

♠	K 10 6 3 2
♥	K 5
♦	A K 2
♣	9 8 6

♠	4
♥	A J
♦	9 8 7 6 5 4
♣	Q 5 4 2

♠	A 9 8 7
♥	10 8 6 3 2
♦	10 3
♣	K 7

♠	Q J 5
♥	Q 9 7 4
♦	Q J
♣	A J 10 3

W	N	E	S
		Pass	1NT
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

Superficially, it seems that 4♠ should sail home losing one spade, one heart and one club. However, at some tables West elected to lead the two of clubs and now there was no way to avoid East scoring a club ruff. Minus 100 was not a pretty sight against the plus scores recorded by North-South for their no trump game. Communications were not easy for South, but all declarers made at least nine tricks and usually ten.

A better auction, looking for a 5-4 fit in spades, would be as follows:

W	N	E	S
		Pass	1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♥
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

If you play promissory Stayman, South will, with four spades and four hearts, correct to 4♠ after 3NT, knowing partner must have four spades to bother with Stayman at all. The 5-4 better fit will still be found. Otherwise the contract will usually be preferable, as here, in 3NT. ☐

At some tables the bidding followed the all too familiar pattern of transfer, no trump limit raise, and finally major-suit game.

# Club Bidding Quiz Questions

by Julian Pottage



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

## Hand 1

♠ K Q 8  
♥ K Q 9 7  
♦ K Q 10  
♣ J 6 2

W	N	E	S
		2♣ <sup>1</sup>	?

<sup>1</sup> weak

## Hand 2

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

W	N	E	S
	1♥	2♠ <sup>1</sup>	?

<sup>1</sup> weak

## Hand 3

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

W	N	E	S
		3♣	?

## Hand 4

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

W	N	E	S
			?

## Hand 5

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

W	N	E	S
1♦	1♥	1♠	?

## Hand 6

♠ 5  
♥ J 3  
♦ K Q 7 4 2  
♣ K 10 7 4 3

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	Pass	?

Answers overleaf

## Hand 1

♠ K Q 8  
♥ K Q 9 7  
♦ K Q 10  
♣ J 6 2

W	N	E	S
		2♠ <sup>1</sup>	?

<sup>1</sup> weak 2

## Hand 2

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

W	N	E	S
	1♥	2♠ <sup>1</sup>	?

<sup>1</sup> weak jump overcall

## Hand 3

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

W	N	E	S
		3♣	?

**2NT.** A 2NT overcall of a weak two shows much the same hand as a 1NT overcall of a one-level opening. Although you are making the bid at a higher level, it is usual to assume that partner has some values when the opponents make a weak opening.

**3♥.** Without the jump overcall, you would have raised to 2♥. With the overcall, it is worth bidding at a level higher than planned to show your support. The corollary is that if you were planning to bid 3♥ anyway (change the ♣5 to the ♣A for example) then you would have to take a stronger action (4♥ or a 3♠ cue bid).

**Dble.** You would have a perfect hand for a takeout double of a 1♣ opening and a double of a weak 3♣ opening shows much the same. As on problem 1, when an opponent announces weakness, you place partner with some of the missing values and so can enter the auction despite the higher level.

Answers continued overleaf

## Hand 4

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

W	N	E	S
			?

## Hand 5

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

W	N	E	S
1♦	1♥	1♣	?

## Hand 6

♠ 5  
♥ J 3  
♦ K Q 7 4 2  
♣ K 10 7 4 3

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	Pass	?

**1♥.** For several reasons this is a 1♥ opening, not a 3♥ opening: (a) you have good support for spades (b) you have two defensive tricks (A-Q counts as one a half, the king as a half) and (c) adding your high card points to the length of your two longest suits gives 20, strong enough for a one-level opening.

**3♥.** An overcall normally indicates a five-card (or longer) suit. With four-card support you now know of a nine-card fit and so bid to the nine-trick level. By jumping the bidding, you make it harder for the opponents to find their best fit and/or the correct level at which to play.

**Pass.** While East's pass tells you partner must have some values, the singleton spade is a big warning signal. Despite holding some values, partner could not overcall 1♠, so the opponents might well have a better fit in spades than they do in hearts.





I have written about coups before. There are the oldest coups – Deschapelles, Merrimac, Vienna and Bath. These are all sound technical plays, with the Bath Coup well within the range of the average club player. [You can read about them here, on page 21.](#)

In February 2012 I wrote about the Scissors, Crocodile and Devil's Coups. [\(click here and go to p19\)](#). The last of these is so rare that many an expert will go through their entire life without playing one. I also described the Biltcliffe Coup, named by David Bird. This one occurs frequently, at all levels, but it is not one you would tell your friends about if you perpetrated it.

Later that year I described the Grosvenor Gambit [\(click here and go to p26\)](#), a not entirely serious defensive play that seldom occurs, either because the defender doesn't think of it in time, or doesn't have the nerve to try it out.

And there matters rested until September 2021, when I introduced you to the Idiot Coup [\(click here\)](#), another one you should definitely avoid falling for.

To complete the set, here are a few more. I am **definitely not** recommending them. I am only telling you about them so that you are forewarned, not so that you can add them to your armoury.

The Alcatraz Coup dates from the '50s and occurs when a dishonest declarer has a suit like this:



With no clues as to the whereabouts of the ♦Q, declarer plays the jack from dummy and, when East plays low, discards a card from a different suit. As soon as West

follows, South picks up his revoke card (not yet 'established') and plays a diamond; the three if West had followed small, but the ace if West had played the queen. West is allowed to take his queen back, but declarer can now take the marked finesse. Suffice it to say that this is cheating, and the laws of the game were changed so that a declarer cannot gain from such a play. It's also impossible in online bridge!

The Briar Patch Coup is another one that should not be in your repertoire. (You will recall the story of Brer Rabbit begging Brer Fox to roast him, or to hang him, but please, please, not to throw him into the briar patch.) Feigning weakness by hesitation, comment or facial expression, to try to get your opponents to play a suit you like, is not something even bridge rabbits should do. On the other hand, opening your weaker four-card minor, in an attempt to dissuade your opponents from leading the suit, is

*continued overleaf*

quite acceptable, and bridge foxes have been doing it for years.

You need to be especially wary of the Colour Coup. The contract is 4♥ and the trumps are distributed like this:



Declarer wins the lead in dummy and starts on trumps, getting the bad news when East discards on the first round. They play their next three cards quickly: the ♥A, immediately followed by the ♥K and then the ♦Q – yes diamonds. For the coup to work declarer needs to

hold the ♦Q – the queen of the same colour. Played at speed West is confused into assuming declarer played the ♥Q and revokes. This one is against the Laws too – *‘varying the normal tempo of bidding or play for the purpose of disconcerting an opponent’* is a violation.

Let us end with a nice non-controversial coup. You know you have played well when, at trick thirteen, one of your opponents has to ruff his partner’s winner. In Poland this is known as a Cambriolage Coup, cambriolage being the French for burglary. □



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When you are playing a suit and the finesse is the correct play, it often helps to take a top honour first 'just in case'. Consider this layout of the spade suit:



The odds suggest taking the finesse as that is a 50-50 shot. Laying down the ♠A then the ♠K, hoping the queen will fall doubleton, is a much lower chance.

However, assuming you have plenty of entries to the South hand, the correct play is to cash the ♠A first. One time in fifty the queen will fall singleton on your right, solving all your problems. If only small cards appear then you should return to South and take the spade finesse on the second round.

The same principle applies here, played in 4♠ by South against the ♦Q lead:

South plays in 4♠.  
West leads the  
♦Q.

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

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♠ AK108  
♥ AK  
♦ 875  
♣ QJ93

The opponents, rather meanly, take the first three diamond tricks, as West started with ♦QJ109, leaving you with the prospect of having to make the rest. You cannot afford a spade loser, so should aim to take the finesse as that is your best shot.

However, you need to play the trump suit with great accuracy. East takes the third round of diamonds with the ace and exits with a heart. You take that, perforce, cash the ♠A (you never know, the queen might fall singleton), cross to dummy with the ♣A and lead the ♠J. This way, you can pick up

the suit for no losers even if East started life with ♠Q9xx and covers the jack.

Now, a caveat.

Suppose you have a suit distributed in this manner:



It may look as though the right play is to cash the ♠A first before returning to hand to take the club finesse but this is an illusion. For sure, this play will gain when East has the singleton queen but will fail whenever East started with a small singleton (four times more likely).

To pick up ♠Qxxx on your left you must take the first round finesse, returning to the South hand and repeating the finesse if that play is successful.

*Continued overleaf*

## QUESTION 1

How might you play in 3NT after the following auction?

W	N	E	S
Pass	3NT	All Pass	1NT

South plays in 3NT. West leads the ♦K.

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

### PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Your *Count and Plan* reveals seven top tricks (three spades, one heart, one diamond and two clubs). For sure, spades may break 3-3 but that's not going to help much. You really need to bring the clubs in for five tricks (or, more importantly, for no losers) to make your contract. If you lose the lead, you may be buried under an avalanche of diamonds.

## ANSWER

You take the ♦A (on the first or second round, it makes no odds) and must bring in the club suit without loss. The finesse, of course, is a better play than laying down the ♣AK, hoping the queen falls.

It costs you nothing to cash the ♣A first, in case the queen falls. If it does, all your problems are solved. If it doesn't, you should return to hand with a spade and take the club finesse. If it fails then you are sure to go down (unless there's a lucky diamond blockage), but that's life.

Here's the full deal:

3NT by South. West leads the ♦K

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

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Question 2 overleaf



## QUESTION 2

How might you play in 3NT after the following auction?

W	N	E	S
Pass	3NT	All Pass	1NT

South plays in 3NT. West leads the ♦K.

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



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

### PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Your *Count and Plan* reveals seven top tricks (three spades, one heart, one diamond and two clubs). For sure, spades may break 3-3 but that's not going to help much. You really need to bring the clubs in for five tricks (or, more importantly, for no losers) to make your contract. If you lose the lead, your boat may be swamped by a tsunami of diamonds.

When you cash the ♣A, East drops the jack. What now?

## ANSWER

You take the ♦A (on the first or second round, it makes no odds) and must bring in the club suit without loss. It looks as though you need a 2-2 club break, but on the ♣A East drops the jack. What now?

It always surprises players that a second round finesse is twice as good a play as playing for the drop. In other words, it is more likely that East's ♣J is a singleton than a holding of ♣QJ doubleton. Accordingly, you should return to hand with a spade and take the club finesse. If it fails then you are unlucky and sure to go down (unless there's a lucky diamond blockage).

Here's the full deal:

3NT by South. West leads the ♦K

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

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The finesse may be everybody's favourite play but there are times when it is unnecessary, even positively dangerous.

For example, how would you play in 6♠ on this deal? West leads the ♣2.

South plays in 6♠.  
West leads the ♣2.

♠ A 9 7 3  
♥ K 7 6  
♦ A 4  
♣ K Q 10 3

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play hand  
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have a go  
Press 'Next' to  
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♠ Q J 10 8 6  
♥ A 10 8  
♦ K 9  
♣ A J 5

Your initial *Count and Plan* reveals twelve or thirteen tricks: four or five spades, two hearts, two diamonds and four clubs. Your heart loser will be dumped on dummy's long club.

So, there's nothing to this hand; you win the club in hand and finesse trumps, right? Well, you might play this way in a pairs event but it's very much the wrong play if securing your contract is paramount. Have you considered the significance of this lead? The **two** usually suggests an honour card and yet you have the ♣AKQJ10 between the closed hand and dummy.

There is overwhelming evidence that West has a singleton club and that taking the spade finesse is fraught with danger.

Here's the full hand:

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

The correct way to play the hand, guaranteeing your slam contract, is to take the opening lead and play off the ♠A and another spade. If West has the ♠K he is welcome to it; if East has it, he can no longer give West a ruff.

How would you play in 4♥ here? West leads the ♠K; East overtakes with the ace and leads the ♦10.

South plays in 4♥.  
West leads the ♠K.

♠ J 5  
♥ J 10 9 5  
♦ A 8 5  
♣ A K 7 6

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play hand  
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♠ 7 2  
♥ A K 8 3  
♦ K Q 7 3  
♣ Q 5 3

Why has East defended like this? The answer is that he probably has a singleton diamond. In the normal course of events, you might have cashed the ♥A, crossed to

Continued overleaf

dummy and run the ♥J. Here, that is fraught with danger as East may secure a diamond ruff if West were to win a trump with a doubleton queen.

Best play is to take the diamond and bang down the ♥AK. You may find trouble if trumps break 4-1 but your contract is assured if they break 3-2, even if the queen doesn't fall. Your losers are confined to two spades and one heart.



## QUESTION 1

How might you play in 4♥ after West leads the ♠2?

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

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



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

## PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

West leads the ♠2 to his partner's ace, who then switches to the ♦2. Your *Count and Plan* reveals ten tricks in the guise of four hearts, one diamond and five clubs. You also have four possible losers – one heart, one diamond and two spades. What is going on, however? Should you finesse in diamonds and then in trumps?

## ANSWER

East's defence is a little odd. Why is he so anxious to attack diamonds, your second suit? It is highly suspicious and suggests he has a singleton. To avoid adverse ruffs, you should take the ♦A and cash the ♥AK. As long as trumps are 3-2 you are almost sure to make your contract.

You can run off the clubs now, dumping your spade loser, and can afford to lose just one spade, one heart and one diamond. If the cards are as below, you'll actually make an overtrick, whereas finessing in either red suit would lead to defeat. Here's the full deal:

4♥ by South. West leads the ♠2

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

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

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

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

Question 2 overleaf

## QUESTION 2

How might you play in 4♠ after West leads the ♥2?

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

♠ A J 10 8 6 3  
♥ K Q 3  
♦ Q 6  
♣ Q 3



♠ 9 7 4  
♥ A J 10 4  
♦ K 9 8  
♣ A J 5

### PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Your *Count and Plan* reveals enough winners (four or five spades, four hearts, a slow diamond and a club) but maybe too many losers (possibly two spades, a sure diamond and a potential club). The odds play in spades is to take two finesses, playing low to the ten and then running the nine. Is that the right play here, though?

## ANSWER

Finessing in trumps is dangerous now as the opposition may make three(!) trump tricks via the ♠Q and two ruffs.

The best play is to take the heart lead and play off the ♠A and another spade, hoping trumps are 2-2 or that a singleton honour falls on the ace.

If the cards are as below, 4♠ is now unbeatable; the losing club is going on the long heart. Here's the full deal:

4♠ by South. West leads the ♥2

♠ A J 10 8 6 3  
♥ K Q 3  
♦ Q 6  
♣ Q 3

♠ K 5 2  
♥ 2  
♦ 7 5 4 2  
♣ K 10 8 6 2

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

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

♠ 9 7 4  
♥ A J 10 4  
♦ K 9 8  
♣ A J 5

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**L**ots of bridge players love to trump when they are declarer but, like eating chocolate, it's not always a good thing! Just because you can, doesn't mean you should.

As declarer, when you play a trump there has to be a reason and not just 'because it makes me feel good'. Hold that feeling for when you are in defence.

When you first learn to play bridge, you are told to draw the opponents' trumps. But why do you need to do that? Let's look at the main reasons for drawing trumps, and some of the exceptions.

## SITUATION ONE

We learn from the cradle that we need to draw trumps until the opponents have not got any left and then we can safely play the winners in the other suits without those top cards being trumped by the nasty opponents. Let's look at this deal.

South plays in 7♠.  
West leads the ♣J.

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

Click here for hand. Press 'Play' to have a go. Press 'Next' to see Harold play it

♠ A Q J 4  
♥ A 3  
♦ 9 7 6 4  
♣ K Q 6

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West leads the ♣J. You have magnificent trumps and outstanding strength in clubs and hearts. All you have to do is win the lead. Draw four rounds of trumps if the suit happens to break 4-1, and claim three clubs, six hearts and four trump tricks. You don't need to trump anything – all your losing diamonds can be thrown on your lovely heart suit in dummy.

**TOP TIP:** With good trumps, and good strength outside, it is usual to draw trumps.

*continued overleaf*

## SITUATION TWO

Sometimes you need to try and make all your trumps separately with a **cross-ruff**. You might use this when you have the same or a similar number of trumps in both hands (such as 4-4, 5-4) and a shortage in one hand and a different shortage in the other hand.

South plays in 7♠.  
West leads the ♦K.

♠ K 9 8 7 2  
♥ K 5  
♦ 7  
♣ A 5 4 3 2

Click here for  
hand. Press  
'Play' to have a  
go. Press  
'Next' to see  
Harold play it

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

West leads the ♦K. Initially you have nine winners without doing any work at all. You have no worthwhile suit to establish. However, you do have a different singleton in each hand.

This lets you count your winners differently: you have two top hearts, a diamond and a club. After that you can ruff four diamonds in North's hand and four clubs in South's hand. Plus, you will make the top trump. Thirteen tricks. You will need four trumps in each hand for ruffing.

When you play it out win the lead and play one round of trumps only. Now cash two top hearts immediately. It's usually safest to take your top tricks in outside suits before starting a cross-ruff. Otherwise one of your opponents may have run out of hearts by the time you come to play them and still have a trump.

**DECLARER TOP TIP:** If you have good trumps in both hands, and each hand has a different shortage, you can generate extra tricks by using your trumps separately. Most of the time don't draw trumps at all if you wish to embark on a 'cross ruff'. In the example shown you can afford one round of trumps.

**DEFENCE TOP TIP:** If the opposition seem to be in a contract that isn't justified by their points (here they are in 7♠ with just 25 points), they will either try to make tricks by running two excellent suits (trumps and another), or by setting up a cross-ruff.

**Listen to the bidding** – if either dummy or declarer has shown a strong second suit you need to make an aggressive lead in a side suit. You want to cash your winners before they disappear. Declarer will aim to draw trumps and then run the side suit discarding losers.

If, instead, they have perhaps shown a shortage in a side suit then it is usually a good idea to lead a trump to stop the cross-ruff. If declarer doesn't want to take out trumps, the defenders do. There are bids that show a shortage in a suit – splinters and responses to Jacoby. If you are unsure what the opposition bids mean, make sure you ask when it's time to lead so that you can make the best decision.

*continued overleaf*

## SITUATION THREE

There will be many times when the dummy will be the hand with fewer trumps, and if it also has shortage you can '**ruff in the short hand**' while you still have trumps. This usually means you must delay drawing trumps.

South plays in 7♠.  
West leads the  
♣K.

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

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

♠ A K Q J 8 5  
♥ A 3  
♦ A K 4 2  
♣ 3

Initially, without doing any work, you have 11 tricks – six spades, two hearts, two diamonds and one club. You can reach thirteen tricks by ruffing diamonds twice in dummy.

You will have to delay drawing trumps until you have ruffed diamonds in dummy – the short hand.

If you had chosen to take out trumps and they broke badly it might have taken three rounds leaving you with no trumps in the short hand to score your two diamond ruffs. In this instance all your trumps are high, but with lower trumps on table you would need to ruff as early as possible. You would cash the ♦A, then ruff a small diamond. Return to hand with a trump, and ruff the second small diamond. Your work is done. Return to hand by trumping a club in hand (high). Draw trumps and cash your remaining winners.

**DECLARER TOP TIP:** If you have good trumps and dummy has an outside shortage you should delay drawing trumps until dummy has scored ruffs in the short suit to generate the extra tricks.

**DEFENCE TOP TIP:** If dummy has a short suit outside trumps it's often a good idea to lead a trump, particularly if you think that you or partner would otherwise have winners in that suit. Let's say you lead an ace (from ace-king) and dummy has a doubleton. Don't automatically snatch your second winner in the suit - consider a switch to trumps.

continued overleaf

## SITUATION FOUR

You need to drop some losers before the opposition win a trick – reducing your quick losers.

South plays in 6♥.  
West leads the  
♦10.

♠ A K Q J 10  
♥ J 10 4 2  
♦ A Q J  
♣ 4

Click here for  
hand. Press  
'Play' to have a  
go. Press  
'Next' to see  
Harold play it

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

You cannot do anything about the ace of trumps, but the diamond is risky. A finesse might fail and you would be immediately down. Can you see what to do? Eschew the finesse and then throw the remaining diamond in your hand before letting the opponents in with that trump ace.

After winning the ♦A play two top spades, dumping your remaining diamond on the second one.

Your problem has now gone away and you can draw trumps. You will lose just the ♥A and nothing else.

**DECLARER TOP TIP:** If you are missing the ace of trumps you may need to dispose of losers in other suits before drawing trumps.

**DEFENCE TOP TIP:** When West leads the ♦10 on this hand and declarer wisely rises with the ace, East should play an encouraging card to show the king – click the link to see the whole deal.

Initially you have eight winners – five spades, two minor suit aces and the club king – you will have trump winners too, but they are not off the top.

*continued overleaf*

## SITUATION FIVE

Sometimes you need to get a second suit going in dummy when you still have an entry which might be a top trump.

South plays in 4♥.  
West leads the ♦A.

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

Click here for hand. Press 'Play' to have a go. Press 'Next' to see Harold play it

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

South reaches 4♥, and West has an easy lead of the ♦A. Having cashed the ♦AK, West switches to the ♠10 and South is facing four losers (two spades and two diamonds).

With only nine winners this is not the time to draw trumps. The only source of extra tricks is that long club suit on the table, and the shortage of entries means clubs will have to break 3-3 for success. Declarer should take the ♠A at trick three, cash the ♣AK and ruff a club (high, just in case). When all follow, the clubs on table are winners, so South can play three rounds of trumps, ending with the ♥Q, and dump two spades on the master clubs. That's an overtrick.

**TOP TIP:** If you need to establish a suit in dummy you often require multiple entries which might be in trumps. Avoid using your last entry to table until your suit is set up.

**DEFENCE TOP TIP:** If declarer takes out trumps until defence have just the master trump left, it is often a good idea to lead this if you get in, particularly if the 'short' hand (usually dummy) still has a trump left. You will be taking out two for one, and declarer probably had ruffing plans for the trump left in dummy. ☐





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In each of the following hands, you are sitting South, and will face a situation that commonly goes awry for aspiring players. Imagine that you are playing in a 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.

Hand 1

♠ K Q 2  
♥ 5 3  
♦ A K J 10 5  
♣ J 6 2

♠ A 8 4 3  
♥ A 9  
♦ 6 4 2  
♣ A 8 7 3

You are in 3NT. West leads the ♥6. Plan your play.

Hand 2

♠ A 10 7 6  
♥ Q J 10  
♦ A 9 3  
♣ Q J 8

♠ K 8 5  
♥ K 8 7 6  
♦ K 8 6  
♣ K 6 5

You are in 3NT. West leads the ♦Q. Plan your play.

Hand 3

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

♠ J 10 6 4  
♥ A Q 4  
♦ A Q 9  
♣ A 7 3

You are in 4♠ after East has opened a Weak 2♥. West leads the ♥3. Plan your play.

Hand 4

♠ 8 4  
♥ K Q 7 3  
♦ A 6 5 4  
♣ A Q 8

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


You are in 6♥. West leads the ♠10 to East's ♠A, and East returns the ♠5. Plan your play.

Answers overleaf

# Declarer Play Quiz - answers

Hand 1

♠ K Q 2  
♥ 5 3  
♦ A K J 10 5  
♣ J 6 2



♠ A 8 4 3  
♥ A 9  
♦ 6 4 2  
♣ A 8 7 3

You are in 3NT. West leads the ♥6. Plan your play.

You have seven top tricks (three spades, one heart, two diamonds and one club). At least two extra tricks can be made in diamonds, but after winning the ♥A, you can expect to lose at least four heart tricks if you lose the lead at any point. You therefore hope to make extra tricks in diamonds without losing the lead. What is your best chance of achieving this?

Missing five cards in diamonds, you have a better chance of avoiding a loser if you plan to finesse West for the ♦Q rather than hoping to drop the ♦Q (if East holds the ♦Q). Following this plan, you could win the ♥A on the first or second round, then lead the ♦2 towards dummy's ♦10. If West holds the ♦Q, then

after dummy's ♦10 wins this trick, you can cross back to the ♠A and lead a second diamond to repeat the finesse.

However, this would involve taking an unnecessary risk, since East could have started with just one diamond, the ♦Q. It therefore costs nothing to start by playing a diamond to the ♦A. If East follows with the ♦Q, then you can simply cash dummy's diamonds. If East follows with a low diamond, then you can cross back to the ♠A and lead the ♦4 to dummy's ♦10. You will still be defeated if East started with ♦Qx, or ♦Qxx, but in the deal shown, East will discard. You can now cash the ♠KQ (in case spades split 3-3), then cross back to the ♣A, and repeat the diamond finesse to give you a total of 10 or 11 tricks depending on the spade split.

Hand 1. 3NT by South

♠ K Q 2  
♥ 5 3  
♦ A K J 10 5  
♣ J 6 2

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

♠ 10 9 7 5  
♥ K J 7 4  
♦ 8  
♣ K 10 9 5

♠ A 8 4 3  
♥ A 9  
♦ 6 4 2  
♣ A 8 7 3


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

*Continued overleaf*

# Declarer Play Quiz - answers

Hand 2

♠ A 10 7 6  
♥ Q J 10  
♦ A 9 3  
♣ Q J 8



♠ K 8 5  
♥ K 8 7 6  
♦ K 8 6  
♣ K 6 5

You are in 3NT. West leads the ♦Q. Plan your play.

You have four top tricks (two spades and two diamonds). You can make three extra tricks by force in hearts, and two extra tricks in clubs. Does it matter which suit you try first?

Your contract will be in danger if diamonds split 5-2, and West has either the ♥A or the ♣A, since you might then lose three diamond tricks in addition to the two aces that you need to force out. If West has both aces, you will always be defeated, and if she has neither ace, then you can always succeed. However, if you win the first trick with the ♦K, and lead a heart, you will be defeated if East can win the ♥A and return a diamond, if West holds the ♣A.

Similarly, if you win the ♦K, and lead a club, the defence will prevail if East can win the ♣A and

return a diamond, and West holds the ♥A.

However, if diamonds are 5-2, you can avoid misguessing which ace to force out first if you can ensure that East has no more diamonds to return when she wins her ace. This can be achieved by simply ducking the first diamond. West can continue with the ♦J, but you can now win the ♦K, and lead a heart. If East wins the ♥A, she will be unable to return a diamond. Say she leads the ♠Q instead, you can win with dummy's ♠A, cash dummy's heart winners then lead the ♣Q. West can choose when to win the ♣A, but whether she plays a diamond or a spade, you can regain the lead and play your remaining winners to make your game.

Hand 2. 3NT by South

♠ A 10 7 6  
♥ Q J 10  
♦ A 9 3  
♣ Q J 8

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

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

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

♠ K 8 5  
♥ K 8 7 6  
♦ K 8 6  
♣ K 6 5

*continued overleaf*

# Declarer Play Quiz - answers

You are declarer in 4♠, after East has opened a Weak 2♥. West leads the ♥3.

How would you plan to make your contract?

Following West's ♥3 lead, you have six top tricks (one spade, one heart, three diamonds and one club), but you can expect to win an extra trick with the ♥Q, and at least three extra tricks in spades.

After you win the first trick, you have to decide when and how to play the spades. West is assumed to have started with just one heart, so it is a good idea to draw trumps early.

In isolation, the best chance of avoiding a spade loser is to finesse West for the ♠K.


However, when looking at the full hand, your contract will be in danger if East wins the lead and plays a second heart that is

trumped by West, as you will then be left with a heart and club loser in addition to the two trump tricks that you have already lost.

It is too risky to take the spade finesse. You should instead lead the ♠4 to the ♠A. If West has the ♠K, then you will miss the chance to make an overtrick, but if East has the ♠K, you will avoid the danger of West trumping one of your heart winners. When East follows with a low spade, you lead the ♠2 from the dummy. If West wins the ♠K, she will be unable to get East on lead before you have a chance to draw any outstanding trumps. When East wins the ♠K, then West will have none remaining, so even if East plays a second heart, West will no longer be able to trump, and you will win four spade tricks, two heart tricks, three diamonds and one club to make your contract.

Hand 3

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



♠ J 10 6 4  
♥ A Q 4  
♦ A Q 9  
♣ A 7 3

You are in 4♠ after East has opened a Weak 2♥. West leads the ♥3.  
Plan your play.

Hand 3. 4♠ by South

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

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

[Click here to play hand](#)  
[Press 'Play' to have a go](#)  
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♠ K 7  
♥ K J 10 9 6 2  
♦ 8 2  
♣ J 9 5


♠ J 10 6 4  
♥ A Q 4  
♦ A Q 9  
♣ A 7 3

*continued overleaf*

# Declarer Play Quiz - answers

Hand 4

♠ 8 4  
♥ K Q 7 3  
♦ A 6 5 4  
♣ A Q 8



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

You are in 6♥. West leads the ♠10 to East's ♠A, and East returns the ♠5. Plan your play.

You have ten top tricks (six hearts, three diamonds and one club) and, having gained the lead at trick two, you now have an extra winner in spades. With plenty of trumps between your two hands, you can draw trumps, then decide how to try to make the extra trick that you need.

What options do you have?

If West has the ♣K, then you can make an extra trick by leading towards dummy's ♣Q. There is also the possibility of making an extra trick in diamonds if the six cards that you are missing split 3-3. In isolation, the chance of a successful finesse is greater than the chance that a suit will split 3-3, so you may be tempted to immediately try the club finesse.

However, if you follow this approach, and your finesse loses, then you will not be able to find

out whether diamonds were dividing evenly in time for it to be useful to you. It would therefore be better if you could combine your chances. Since you can test out the diamonds without having to risk losing the lead, it is better to play on diamonds first.

So, having drawn trumps, you can next play the ♦K, the ♦Q and the ♦7 to dummy's ♦A. If diamonds do not split 3-3, you can trump dummy's ♦6, then try the club finesse. But, when diamonds split 3-3, dummy's ♦6 is a winner, and you can simply discard the ♣2, removing the need to risk the club finesse. Trying diamonds first gives you two chances to make your slam, either diamonds can split 3-3, or you hope for a winning club finesse. □

Hand 4. 6♥ by South

♠ 8 4  
♥ K Q 7 3  
♦ A 6 5 4  
♣ A Q 8

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

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

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

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





Bridge Base Online (BBO), as you may well know, is a great place to go to play partnership bridge online with and against other players. There are tournaments galore and loads of different playing options; you can play with your friends from the bridge club, as well as other players from around the world, and of course robots. If you want to play bridge, you'll always find a game to play on BBO.

But, what if you want to improve without having to pay for lessons or work to the rhythm of a bridge teacher. What options are open to you, to get over the game's initial hurdles? Over the coming issues we'll be looking at ways you can improve your bridge, without spending money, and without having to rely on anyone else but yourself and your own desire to learn.

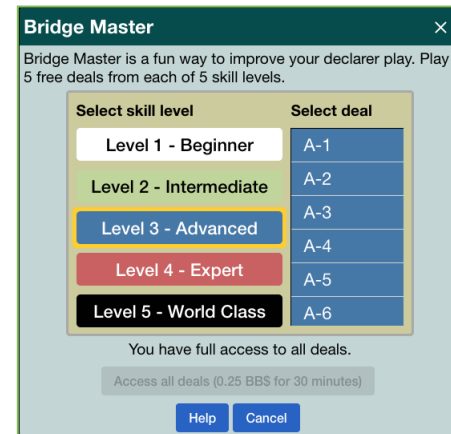
This first BBO column is all about the card play training software, Bridge Master, which is available for free on BBO.

Bridge Master is a great way to start practising bridge play, and used by players even at the top of their game. It focuses on

card play, rather than bidding. The deals are carefully constructed to illustrate an important declarer play technique. The defensive cards are not fixed; they vary with the line of play chosen. Bridge Master is designed to allow only the 'correct' line of play to make the contract.

For example, let's say you have a two-way finesse for a queen. You have the option to play either the left or right hand opponent. If you find the finesse fails one way, you might try replaying it and taking the finesse the other way . . . you'll find the queen has moved! That's because, choosing the best line means you won't have to take a finesse at all. You may need to throw the opposition in at the end, forcing them to play the suit in question. The emphasis here is not using guesswork, it's all about thinking through your card playing sequence. Have a go at Level 3, Deal A-6 to see this in action.

So, what do you see when you play? Log in and click on Practice>Bridge Master. You choose your level and jump straight in. Everything works in a similar way to the rest



of BBO but there's no need to bid. You can see the contract and auction. Clicking on a bid gives you clues as to the distribution allowing you to come up with your card playing strategy.

Things start off quite easily, but become more complicated the further into Bridge Master you go. You can see the solution when needed, but it's best to try at least a few different strategies to unlock the hand; think entries, distribution and bidding. It's

*Continued overleaf*



much more gratifying to work it out first and then check out the solution to reinforce your learning. You'll soon gain a much better understanding of promoting, finessing, ruffing, and discarding cards.

It's really important to try and work out the play without looking at the solution. It can be challenging sometimes to find the right play, but persevere and you will get there. Doing this really helps you to visualize the cards.

There are hundreds of hands to work

through, which will help you master a wide variation of hand combinations. Playing Bridge Master regularly is a sure-fire way to improve your game.

Once you manage to master the Level 1 deals without looking at the solutions,

you'll have reached the level of a bridge beginner. Once you've mastered Level 3 you can consider yourself a solid card player.

Not just for players starting out, Bridge Master is also good for experienced players and even professionals. You're never too good for Bridge Master. Levels 4 and 5 are challenging even for the best players in the world.

In the next edition you'll see some other ways to use BBO to practise, improve and above all have fun playing bridge.

You can play Bridge Master and other games anonymously and for free at [www.bridgebase.com](http://www.bridgebase.com). You can also login to Bridge Base Online to play and chat in real time with players from around the world. □





Usually, as a defender, there is no higher goal than defeating the opponent's contract . . . unless you are playing matchpoint pairs – the usual form of club bridge. At pairs, you aren't trying to get a plus score – you are trying to get a better score than everyone else. Letting your opponents make 3NT, scoring you -400 can be just as good as making +50 if the rest of the room is making -430 from 3NT+1. As such, it is important not to give away tricks unnecessarily. And that means leading more safely.

In my original run of articles, I discussed opening leads against no trumps, suits, and slams, but I have yet to mention leads when playing matchpoints. Consider what you would lead as West with the following hand:

♠ K J 8 4	W	N	E	S
♥ 10 6 5 3				1NT
♦ A 9 2	Pass	3NT	All Pass	
♣ J 7				

A spade lead is what I would call an aggressive lead. It has a lot of upside and a lot of downside. If partner has the queen or ace, we get off to the best possible start. But if partner has neither, we will have given away an unnecessary trick. This is always the risk of leading from an honour and that risk is heightened at matchpoints.

At teams, I would lead the ♠4. Finding partner with a spade honour is the easiest way to beat the contract. At pairs, I would lead a heart. It is unlikely to give a trick away and still has trick-taking potential if we can establish the fourth heart.

I'm not saying you should never lead from an honour. In many cases you should stick to original principles. But if you're at all unsure, lead *safely* at matchpoints. Unless of course, you find yourself on lead against an unusual contract:

♠ J 6 5	W	N	E	S
♥ 7 4 3				1♥
♦ J 9 7 6	Pass	4NT <sup>1</sup>	Pass	5♦ <sup>2</sup>
♣ A 8 7	Pass	6♥	All Pass	

<sup>1</sup>Blackwood; <sup>2</sup>one ace

There's not much to go on is there? The opponents have hearts and a lot of points. Should we lead safe since it's matchpoints? A trump lead is certainly safe. You won't be giving a trick there. But is this really the time to lead safe? People don't bid slams unless they have power – unless they have lots of tricks. If you lead safe, declarer will likely have the rest of the tricks. The jump to Blackwood makes it especially likely that all the opponents are missing is one ace.

*Continued overleaf*

While not giving away tricks is certainly important, another important facet to defence is taking all the tricks you can. Against this contract, you should lead the ♠A. It is likely to be the only trick you will score, but at least you will have scored it. And while the difference between -980 and -1010 is quite small, it may make *all* the difference when playing pairs.

## CASHING OUT

When considering opening leads at matchpoints (pairs), it's important not to give away tricks and to *take* all the tricks that you are entitled to. The same principles apply throughout the defence. Things can be more complex in the middle of the play and a great deal of logic may be needed to arrive at the correct play. Let's look at this hand.

South	North
1♠	2♣
2♠ <sup>1</sup>	4♣
All Pass	
<sup>1</sup> six spades	

♠ 8 4 2	
♥ 7 6	
♦ K Q	
♣ A K Q J 9 2	

♠ 10 5	
♥ A 10 4 3 2	
♦ A 8 7 6 2	
♣ 5	

Partner starts with the ♦J and we take the first trick with the ace. Let's run through our mental checklist. Could the ♦J be a singleton? No. That would give declarer five diamonds and their second bid would have been 2♦. The bidding also suggests South has a low opening point count – the minimum we can hope for is 11 points with nice distribution. Dummy has 15, so they have at least 26 points in total. Add in our eight, and that leaves partner with six points *maximum*. Partner has led a jack, so there's not much left. He has enough points for about one useful card, and if we want to beat the contract, it has to be the ♠A (or the ♠K if declarer takes a finesse).


We can then beat the contract by scoring a club ruff, so we need to play our singleton club before partner wins the top spade. But wait. What if partner doesn't have this extremely useful ♠A? In that case, our club switch could be a complete disaster.


Dummy's club suit will provide declarer with a lot of tricks. If we give up the lead now, we may never score a trick again. Declarer will draw trumps, and run the clubs dropping all his losers. So . . . before playing our singleton club we should cash our ♥A, ensuring that we don't lose it. If partner gives us an encouraging signal on the ace, we can abandon hope of partner holding the ♠A and we should continue hearts. If partner discourages, we can switch to a club, hoping for partner to have the ♠A. The full hand is overleaf:

*Continued overleaf*

# Leads for Club Bridge (Pairs)

In this instance, partner does not have the necessary ♠A or ♠K and we are unable to defeat the contract. But because we had the foresight to cash our ♥A, we score well. -450 may not look like such a good score, but it could be just enough. Everyone who woodenly

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

returned the diamond, or switched to their singleton club will have scored -480. You'll probably score a joint top. 

by Stephen Kennedy

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Bidding is important for partners to exchange information and hopefully get to the best contract, but to borrow from a famous World War II phrase 'Careless talk costs contracts'. A key defensive skill is listening to the bidding and drawing the correct conclusions about what declarer and dummy will hold, both lengths and strength, and to anticipate how declarer will play the hand. Developing this skill will improve your opening leads more than anything else. So the problems here are all about listening to the bidding and drawing the right inferences from it. You are sitting West.

## Hand 1

♠ K J 8 5 2  
♥ 6 5  
♦ K J 8 4 3  
♣ 10

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♣ <sup>1</sup>	Pass
2♥	Pass	3NT	All Pass

<sup>1</sup> Stayman

Choose from: (a) ♠5; (b) ♥6; (c) ♦4; (d) ♣10

## Hand 2

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

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

Choose from: (a) ♠Q; (b) ♥K; (c) ♦8; (d) a club

## Hand 3

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

South	West	North	East
	3♥	Dble	4♥
4♠	Pass	4NT <sup>1</sup>	Pass
5♥ <sup>2</sup>	Pass	6♣	All Pass

<sup>1</sup> Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKCB)  
<sup>2</sup> 2 out of 5 'aces' (4 aces plus K of trumps), no trump Q

You have done your best to get in the opponents' way but have not prevented them bidding a slam. How do you propose to beat it?

Choose from: (a) a spade; (b) ♥K; (c) ♦4; (d) a club

Answers overleaf

You are sitting West. Choose your lead:

Hand 1	
♠	K J 8 5 2
♥	6 5
♦	K J 8 4 3
♣	10

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♣ <sup>1</sup>	Pass
2♥	Pass	3NT	All Pass
<sup>1</sup> Stayman			

Choose from: (a) ♠5; (b) ♥6; (c) ♦4; (d) ♣10

## ANSWER

What do we know about this hand? Opener has four hearts and dummy has four spades (they must have because of the Stayman bid). What does that suggest about the opening lead?

- (a) ♠5: **1 mark.** If the auction had gone 1NT-3NT then I would have led a spade, but notice the importance of listening to the bidding. Dummy has four spades and declarer at least two. So it is highly unlikely that you will be able to set these spades up at all, let alone get in again to cash them.
- (b) ♥6: **2 marks.** This is straight round into declarer's four-card (or even five-card)

suit. Why would you want to do that?

- (c) ♦4: **10 marks.** Far and away the easiest way to beat this contract is to set up and then cash your diamonds. Indeed you may well have five diamond tricks straight off the top with declarer having at least nine tricks on any other lead.
- (d) ♣10: **1 mark.** If partner's clubs were good enough that a lead from the singleton 10 is right, then partner would either have bid them or at the very least doubled Two Clubs (assuming you play that as showing clubs).

**Pairs bonus:** Same lead for the same reasons.

*continued overleaf*

**Y**ou are sitting West. Choose your lead:

Hand 2	
♠	Q J 5 2
♥	K Q 10 4
♦	8 4
♣	9 5 3

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

Choose from: (a) ♠Q; (b) ♥K; (c) ♦8; (d) a club

## ANSWER

Again, listen to the bidding. What do we know? Declarer has at least five hearts and at least four clubs. Dummy has a weak hand (or they would have bid again) with almost always at least two more cards in clubs than hearts (with only one card less they would have gone back to hearts using the principle of 'false preference'). Typically dummy will have a singleton or void heart and three or four clubs. That ought to tell us what to lead.

**(a) ♠Q: 3 marks.** Dummy has length and perhaps some strength in spades. This is

actually quite dangerous. For example dummy could have K10xx and declarer Ax. Your ♠Q lead marks you with the ♠J. Declarer can win in hand with the ♠A and finesse you for the jack later.

**(b) ♥K: 1 mark.** Look at the analysis above. What does it tell you? Declarer is going to ruff hearts in dummy to make tricks. This lead just helps them do that.

**(c) ♦8: 6 marks.** Well, if I was not going to make the right lead, I suppose I would lead this. But you should be leading:

**(d) a club: 10 marks.** It is not usually right to lead trumps – you are simply helping declarer draw trumps and go about setting up their winners. But there are exceptions, and this is a huge one. Against this sort of bidding (where the auction has stopped low in a second suit) the absolute default lead is a trump and you need a very good reason to go against that. The point is that you are desperate to stop declarer using dummy's trumps to ruff their cards in the first suit (hearts on this occasion).

**Pairs bonus:** Same lead for the same reasons.

*continued overleaf*

**Y**ou are sitting West. Choose your lead:

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

South	West	North	East
	3♥	Dble	4♥
4♠	Pass	4NT <sup>1</sup>	Pass
5♥ <sup>2</sup>	Pass	6♠	All Pass

<sup>1</sup> Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKCB)  
<sup>2</sup> 2 out of 5 'aces' (4 aces plus K of trumps), no trump Q

You have done your best to get in the opponents' way but have not prevented them bidding a slam. How do you propose to beat it?

**Choose from:** (a) a spade; (b) ♥K; (c) ♦4; (d) a club

## ANSWER

In many ways defending against slams is easier than other contracts – you only need two tricks. What is the best way to get them? What do you know about the hand? The opponents have bid confidently to 6♠, and partner probably has a key card (else dummy might have made a grand slam try). So it is to be hoped partner has a trick. What about the other one?

**(a) a spade: 1 mark.** Dummy has length and perhaps some strength in spades. It is very rarely right to lead a trump against a slam unless it is a sacrifice. Often it is a race to get your two tricks before declarer gets at 12 tricks.

**(b) ♥K: 5 marks.** Well OK this might be a trick and is certainly safe, but to be a trick, partner will have to have the ace (one of the opponents – most likely dummy – will certainly have a singleton). If partner's ace is in hearts, then where is the other trick to come from? Partner will need another whole trick as nothing in your hand will make a trick. So the right lead is this:

**(c) ♦4: 10 marks.** A good principle in defence is to try and think of what is the least partner needs to beat the contract and play for that. Here, if partner has either pointed ace (diamonds or spades)

you will beat the contract as you will get a ruff. So on the assumption that partner has an ace (and you are unlikely to beat this if they do not) then either of two aces will do it. That is why a singleton lead against a slam is almost always the correct one (unless you have the ace yourself of course!).

**d) a club: 2 marks.** I just do not see why this has anything going for it.

**Pairs bonus:** You get no matchpoints for the opponents making a slam (particularly if you can beat it) so the same lead for the same reasons.

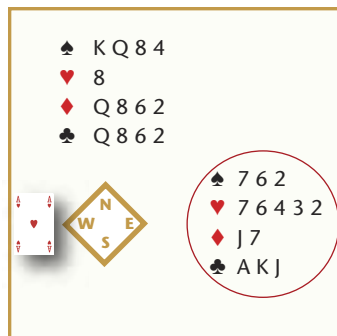


click  
link

There are three types of signals you can give in defence: attitude, count and suit preference. Most of the time you will use attitude and count to tell partner something about the suit that's been led. We use suit-preference signals when attitude is known and count is irrelevant. It is especially useful if you envisage partner gaining the lead and you need them to switch to a particular suit.

## PARTNER LEADS AN ACE IN A SUIT CONTRACT AND DUMMY HAS A SINGLETON

Since dummy will be ruffing the second round of the suit, your attitude or count signals become redundant. It is very likely that the right defence will be to switch to another suit, and you can use this opportunity to indicate which of the remaining two suits (discounting trumps and the suit led) you have a preference for. A high card suggests the higher-ranking of the remaining suits, and a low card, the lower-ranking suit.

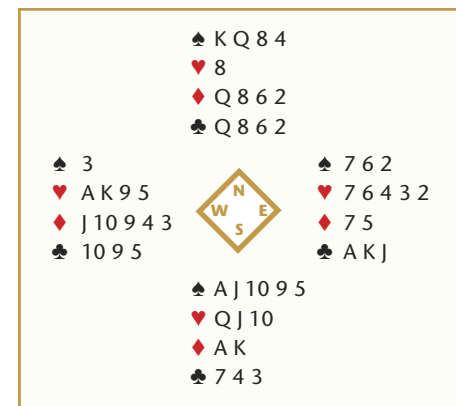


South	North
1♠	3♠
4♠	

You are sitting East and partner leads the ace of hearts. What card should you play, and why?

Partner doesn't need to know whether you like the suit, or how many hearts you have, as with a void in dummy they will have to switch to another suit. You can help here. Playing low suggests the lower ranking of the remaining suits (not trumps). Here

you would play the ♥2 – low to indicate that out of clubs and diamonds you would like a club – the lower ranking suit. Here's the full hand:

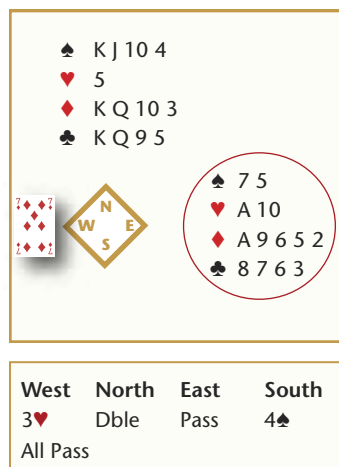


If West had missed the suit preference signal and switched to a diamond, declarer can win the lead, draw trumps, win the top diamond in hand and later drop a losing club from hand on dummy's ♦Q. Contract made and a poor score at the club!

*Continued overleaf*

## WHEN GIVING PARTNER A RUFF

Here is another example when your length or strength becomes irrelevant to partner as they are ruffing it, but what partner needs to know is how to get you back on lead to receive another ruff:



The diagram shows a partial hand with the following cards:

- ♠ K J 10 4
- ♥ 5
- ♦ K Q 10 3
- ♣ K Q 9 5

A diamond card (♦ 7) is shown with a diamond suit preference signal (a diamond symbol) next to it. Below the cards, a table shows the bidding sequence:

West	North	East	South
3♥	Dble	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

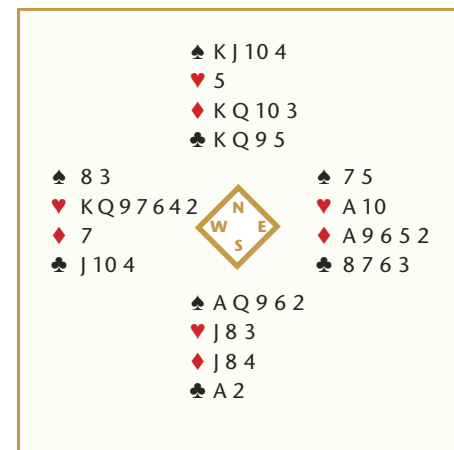
Again, you are sitting East and partner leads the ♦7. You go up with the ace and declarer plays the ♦4.

## How do you read the lead?

Well, you can see all the cards below partner's ♦7 (declarer played the ♦4), so it can't be a doubleton. After partner's pre-empt, it looks likely to be a singleton, so declarer started with three.

## What card do you play now?

Partner is likely to have two or three trumps so you want to return a diamond for a ruff. Ideally you'd then like partner to switch to a suit that allows you to win again to send back another diamond for a second ruff. So, using a suit preference signal, you return the ♦9 – a high diamond asking for the higher ranking of the remaining suits (not trumps). The full deal is shown to the right.



The diagram shows the full deal with the following cards:

- ♠ K J 10 4
- ♥ 5
- ♦ K Q 10 3
- ♣ K Q 9 5

A diamond card (♦ 7) is shown with a diamond suit preference signal (a diamond symbol) next to it. Below the cards, a table shows the bidding sequence:

West	North	East	South
3♥	Dble	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

From West's perspective it is possible that East could have either the ♣A or the ♥A so the suit preference signal was crucial to collecting the second ruff to defeat the contract.

*Continued overleaf*



## SHOWING AN ENTRY WHILE ESTABLISHING A LONG SUIT IN NT

If you are establishing your long suit against a NT contract it is likely that partner will know you like the suit, and how many cards you hold in it. However, establishing a suit often means giving declarer a trick and that frequently draws partner's last card in the suit. If they win a trick they can't lead it back to you, so they need to know how to get back to your hand in another suit allowing you to finally run your carefully-established winners.

Let's have a look at the next hand. Here's the bidding:

West	North	East	South
			1NT <sup>1</sup>
Pass	2♦ <sup>2</sup>	Pass	2♥
Pass	3NT	All Pass	
<sup>1</sup> 12-14, <sup>2</sup> transfer to hearts			

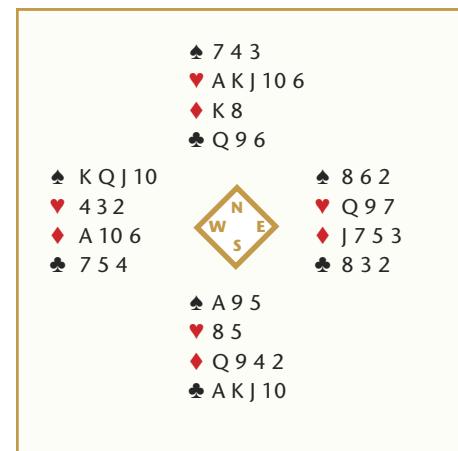


Your partner, West, leads the ♠K and you carefully play the ♠2 to show an odd number of spades (high-even, low-odd). This also denies the ace – you would have taken the ace and returned the spade to unblock the suit. This is good practice – the lead of a king asks partner for 'count' (how many of the suit they started with), or, if they hold the ace, to 'unblock'. West's king holds and West continues with the queen and jack.

Declarer holds up the ace until the third round and takes a heart finesse round to

your queen. You have no spades left - what do you lead? A club or a diamond?

West has asked for a diamond by making a suit preference signal in spades. West led the king, then the queen and then the jack – always the highest – suggesting the higher ranking of the only two possible suits, which in this case are the minors seeing the hearts in dummy. If West had led the king, followed by the ten, then the jack, it would have asked for a club. Here's the full deal:



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Move to the East seat for the next deal:


**Game All. Dealer South.**

♠ 10 7 5 3  
♥ J 10 7  
♦ J 5 3  
♣ 6 5 4

♠ –  
♥ K 8 5 4 2  
♦ 9 7 2  
♣ J 10 9 7 2

♠ Q 9 6  
♥ Q 9 6 3  
♦ A 8 6 4  
♣ 8 3

♠ A K J 8 4 2  
♥ A  
♦ K Q 10  
♣ A K Q



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

West leads the ♣J to declarer's ace. He looks happy when the dummy appears but his smile vanishes when your partner discards a heart on the ace of trumps. How will you defend when declarer's next move is to lead the ♦K from his hand, West following with the ♦2?

If you win with your ♦A, declarer will be able to cross to the ♦J to finesse against your trump queen. You can prevent this by holding up the ♦A.

When declarer continues with the ♦Q, your partner follows with the ♦7, showing that he (and therefore declarer) began with three diamonds. You hold up your ♦A for a second time and the slam is defeated. Declarer will lose a trump and a diamond.

**POINT TO REMEMBER:** Hold up an ace when this may prevent declarer from reaching a weak dummy (to take a finesse, or to reach a winner there.) Your partner will assist you with a count signal in the suit.

*Continued overleaf*



Our last deal features another important occasion on which you can make life awkward for declarer. Would you have made the right move, sitting East again?

**Game All. Dealer South.**

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

♠ K Q 4 3  
♥ J 8 7 4  
♦ 2  
♣ Q 9 3 2

♠ 10 9 8 6 5 2  
♥ A 9 6  
♦ 8  
♣ J 10 6

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

West	North	East	South
			1♦
Pass	1♥	Pass	3♦
Pass	4♦	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♦
All Pass			

West leads the ♠K and declarer wins with the ace. After drawing one round of trumps with the king, he leads the ♥2 to dummy's king, your partner following with the ♥8. How will you defend?

If you win with the ace, the slam will be made. Declarer will ruff your spade return and finesse the ♥10, desperate to set up a discard for his losing club. When the finesse wins, he will take his discard and claim twelve tricks.

If instead you duck smoothly when the ♥K is played from dummy, there is a chance that declarer may go wrong. Let's say that he returns to his hand with the ace of clubs and leads a second heart, West playing the 4. If West holds the ♥A, declarer will need to play dummy's queen to make the slam. If instead West has the ♥J, the necessary play from dummy will be the ♥10. It is a nasty guess for declarer, and some of the time he will guess wrongly and go down.

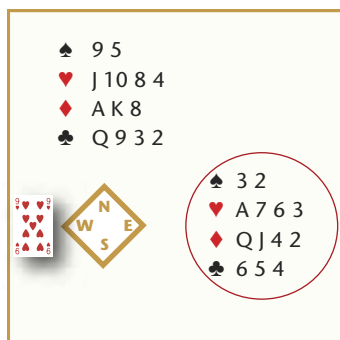
Suppose instead that your partner held

♥A874 and you had ♥J96. Now your partner would have to hold up the ♥A twice, hoping that declarer guesses to finesse the ♥10 on the second round and loses to your jack!

**POINT TO REMEMBER:** Hold up an ace when this will leave declarer with a guess in the suit. Winning immediately may force him to take the winning line.

Quiz overleaf





West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

**Q** West leads the ♥9 covered by dummy's jack. What should you play as East?

**A** First, it's important to 'read' the lead. Partner would not have led the nine from KQ9, K9, Q9, K92 or Q92, so he cannot hold a heart honour. From such as 952, he would have led a MUD five. He cannot hold a singleton nine, since declarer would hold four hearts and would have rebid 2♥. You therefore know that partner has led from a doubleton.

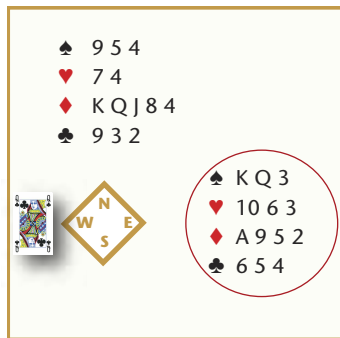
Should you take the ♥A?

No! With no outside entry (such as the top spade) to get the lead later, you must duck the first trick. You will play an encouraging ♥7, retaining the ace in the hope of delivering a ruff later. Declarer wins the trick in dummy and plays a trump to the king and partner's ace. West leads the ♥5 to your ace, ruffs the heart return and cashes the ♣A for one down.

**POINT TO REMEMBER:** Hold up the ace when you think partner has led from a doubleton and a ruff is needed. Only do this when you have no other quick entry. Here's the full deal:



*continued overleaf*



West	North	East	South
Pass	1NT	Pass	1♥
All Pass			4♥

West leads the ♠Q to South's ace. After drawing trumps with the AKQ, declarer plays the ♦7 to West's 10 and dummy's king. Do you take the ace?

If you win with the ace, declarer will be able to cross to dummy with a second diamond and discard any losers on the diamond winners. But does South have any more diamonds to get across? West has given a **count** signal with the ♦10 (high-even, low-odd), so East knows that declarer has (at least) one diamond left. They are either 2-2, or declarer has three.

Declarer wins with the ♦K and plays the ♦Q. Should you play your ace?

Yes! You know that declarer has six trump tricks and the ♣AK (partner's ♣Q lead denied the ♣K). If you duck again in diamonds, declarer will add two diamond winners to his total and make the game. (In any case, if West held only one diamond, he would doubtless have led it at trick one.)

The defenders can take two spade tricks and declarer has to lose a club eventually, going one down.

**POINT TO REMEMBER:** By giving a count signal when declarer plays on one of dummy's suits, you can guide your partner to take the ace at the right moment. Here's the full deal:

N/S Game. Dealer South.

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


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

*continued overleaf*



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

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



West	North	East	South
1NT	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	Pass	2♦	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

Q. Sitting West you lead the ♥K, which is allowed to win, East playing the ♥2. You continue with the ♥J, won with dummy's ace. A low club is led to East's ♣2 and declarer's king. Should you play the ♣A?

A. Partner played low-high in hearts showing an odd number, so you know there is one more heart trick to take. However, if you take the ♣A immediately, the contract will still make. When declarer regains the lead, he will discard his diamond loser on the third round of clubs.


When a club was led from dummy, East made a second count signal – the ♣2 to show an odd number of clubs. Three clubs with East means two clubs with declarer. So, West should hold up his ace for one round, to break the link with the dummy. Declarer cannot avoid four losers in the side suits and will go one down.

**POINT TO REMEMBER:** When partner has given you a count signal as declarer plays on one of dummy's suits, you can judge when to take your ace. Here's the full deal:

## N/S Game. Dealer South.

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

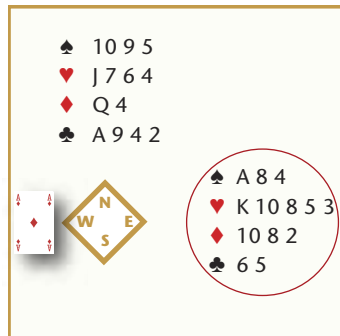
♠ 10 6 2  
 ♥ K Q J 3  
 ♦ K 9 5  
 ♣ A 10 7



♠ 8 4  
 ♥ 10 5 2  
 ♦ Q J 10 8 2  
 ♣ 6 5 2

♠ A K Q J 7 3  
 ♥ 9 7 6  
 ♦ A 3  
 ♣ K 8

*continued overleaf*



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

**Q** West leads the ♦A. Which diamond should you play? After the first trick West switches to a low trump. How should you defend?

**A** On the first diamond you should play the ♦2 to give count (low-high shows an odd number of cards in the suit). An attitude signal would be a waste of time with the ♦Q in the dummy. To give the defence a chance, West must hope that you hold three diamonds rather than five.

With only two diamonds in dummy, declarer no doubt hopes to ruff his third diamond. West therefore switches to a low trump, aiming to remove dummy's trumps before a ruff can be taken. Should you take the ♠A and play a second spade to get two trumps out? That would still leave one trump in dummy to ruff a diamond.

No! You should hold up the ace. Declarer will need to play a second diamond to have a chance of ruffing a diamond in dummy before trumps are drawn. When West wins the second round of diamonds, he will still have a trump to play. The only successful defence is for you to hold up the ♠A. Declarer wins and plays the diamond. West

wins with the ♦K and leads his remaining trump. You can win with the ace and play a third trump. Brilliant! The defenders score one trump and three diamonds to beat the contract.

**POINT TO REMEMBER:** There are several situations where it can be beneficial to hold up the ace of trumps in defence. Here, East's purpose is to be able to draw three rounds of trumps and prevent a ruff by declarer. Here's the full hand.

**N/S Game. Dealer South.**

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

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



**W**hy can't we redeal the board if it is passed out the first time the board is played?

The law says explicitly 'There shall not be a redeal' (Law 22B). The principle is that boards should be random – each possible deal should be equally likely – and if sometimes a board is redealt, then the distribution of possible hands is skewed.

More concretely, a board that is passed out at one table may not be passed at all others (more aggressive players, playing a mini NT or other light openings); when there are three passes, and fourth hand is considering whether to bid, their decision will be different if they know the hand was not passed out the first time it was played.

There are more practical reasons, of course – hands may be duplicated across sections or heats; if the hands were dealt by a computer, the redealt hand will not match the hand records; and if the scoring system is checking the opening leads, it will be confused by the redealt hand.

**W**hy does a revoke mean we lose a trick we must win?

In the good old days, back before bridge was invented, trick-taking games had automatic penalties for infractions, usually expressed in terms of transferring tricks. This allowed players to apply the laws and get on with the game. The penalties were meant to take away any advantage from the infraction – the penalties were not meant to get the right outcome, the intention was that they would always disadvantage the offending side. In whist games, where following suit is an overriding feature of the game, revokes are an infraction, and the penalty was the transfer of more than one trick.

In these enlightened times, the intent of the laws is different: 'They are designed not to punish irregularities but rather to rectify situations where non-offenders may otherwise be damaged.' (Introduction to the *2017 Laws of Duplicate Bridge*).

Nevertheless, there are still some automatic penalties and the revoke law is the most obvious example. If a defender revokes and later the defence make their only trick with the ace of trumps, that one trick is transferred, and the defence lose the trick they were always going to make.

It is worth noting though that only tricks made by either side subsequent to the revoke can be transferred. If the non-offending side make the remaining tricks (including the revoke trick), no tricks are transferred. Tricks made earlier remain with the offending side.

**W**hy can't I bid when partner thinks before doubling, when I was always going to bid?

The laws (Law 16 and Law 73C) on hesitations (and other unauthorised information) are not easy to explain, and not always easy to comply with.

To understand the rationale, we need to look at the beginning of Law 73

*continued overleaf*

‘Communication between partners during the auction and play shall be effected only by means of calls and plays’; communication should be based on what calls were made and what cards were played, not the manner in which they were made/played, nor by extraneous remarks.

If a call is slow (or fast), this conveys information, which is not information conveyed by the call itself. To avoid gaining an advantage from the extra (unauthorised) information, the laws require that players ‘must carefully avoid taking any advantage from that unauthorised information’ – this means bending over backwards from taking advantage – which indeed may mean not bidding when you were always going to bid.

When partner doubles slowly, the double tells you they want to defend, the hesitation tell you they are not sure they want to defend. If you were going to bid and everyone in the room would bid on your hand, with this auction, then you can bid. But usually you or other players in the room would pass because that is what partner’s double tells them to do, and then you must

pass because to do otherwise would be taking advantage of the unauthorised information.

**W**hy can they correct a mechanical error – but I am not allowed to change my mind?

A significant aspect of getting a good result at bridge (like many other sports and games) is avoiding making mistakes – as opposed to doing something skilful or brilliant. We must accept that making mistakes is part of the game and much of the time we have to live with our mistakes.

The laws do allow some mistakes to be corrected, and draws a distinction between a ‘mechanical error’ and ‘a loss of concentration’ (Law 25A2). It is not always easy to make the distinction – brain scientists will explain that concepts such as ‘conscious intention’ are not well understood.

But if an opponent pulls out a bidding card and the next bid is stuck to it, they will be allowed to change their bid to their

intended bid. But if you announce partner’s 2♥ bid as ‘transfer to spades’ and then pass because you have a weak hand, you will not be allowed to change your call to 2♠ because the reason you passed is due to a lack of concentration, not because of a mechanical problem in selecting the right call.

**W**hy do they score more when they make 10 tricks in 3♠ doubled compared to 10 tricks in 4♠ doubled?

In an earlier answer, I said that bridge is a game of mistakes. The scoring table punishes you for your mistakes and punishes bigger mistakes more than smaller mistakes. When you double 3♠ you are saying they will not make nine tricks, whereas if you double 4♠ you are saying they will not make ten tricks. When they make ten tricks in either doubled contract, your misjudgement in doubling 3♠ is greater than your misjudgement in doubling 4♠ and the score you receive for 3♠ doubled +1 is the greater punishment.

*continued overleaf*

**W**hy can't I just play on when declarer claims?

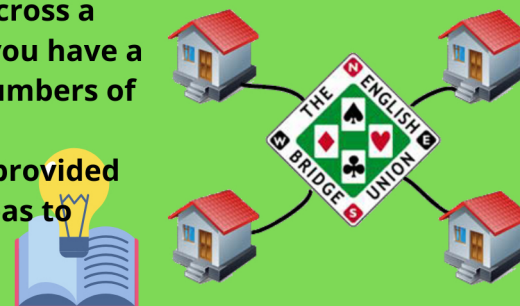
You can play on – as a defender you can suggest that play continues, and if no one (including dummy) objects, you play on. But this is not to your advantage, declarer is not required to play their cards in any particular order and can use any information from the defenders in disputing the claim. If you do not understand the claim, you can ask declarer to explain more fully, by going through what cards he will play to the next few tricks. If you think the claim is wrong, you should call the director and have the director resolve the matter.

You may want to play on because there is a trap for declarer and you (generously) want to give declarer the benefit of the doubt to get the hand right, rather than get a ruling where declarer is likely to be ruled against.

## EBU Sim Pairs

**Sim Pairs events allow you to play the same boards as every other participating club, from the comfort of your own club.**

- **All results are compared across a much bigger field, and so you have a chance at winning large numbers of master points**
- **Expert commentaries are provided afterwards, to give you ideas to improve your play**



**Ask your club about participating in upcoming events:**  
**British Summer Sim Pairs, 25 - 28 July**  
**EBED Autumn Sim Pairs, 5 - 8 September**  
**British Autumn Sim Pairs, 10 - 13 October**

# Thank You Partner! ♥ ♥ ♥ Keeping partner happy

An important part of bridge is partnership harmony. We have all experienced times when partner has shown displeasure at our play, and it can have a negative impact for the remainder of the session. Don't be that partner! If you want to maximise your chances of doing well, both of you need to be in a positive frame of mind.

Bridge is a game of mistakes, and we all make them! However, there are several good reasons to do your utmost to hide your emotions when you believe partner has erred:

- ♥ Showing displeasure will upset partner and spoil their enjoyment of the event.
- ♠ It may have a negative impact on their play on future boards.
- ♦ It usually makes the opponents uncomfortable.
- ♣ It may give unauthorised information if you react while the hand is still live.

♥ You may have misanalysed and it wasn't actually a mistake at all, or partner may have been misled by an unhelpful signal or bid by you.

Of course there will be times when you feel that you and your partner have not been on the same wavelength either in the bidding or in the defence. You are desperate to clarify what went wrong while it is fresh in your mind. If it is something fairly basic that may well come up again in the set of boards, a quick clarification does no harm – 'I thought we were playing transfers? How shall we play going forward?' But for more subtle or complex misunderstandings, it is better simply to make a mark in your scorecard for discussion afterwards, and carry on with the set.

The point about the unauthorised information is an important one. Let's take an example. Suppose your partner has made an overcall in the bidding of 1♠ and the opponents have reached 3NT (hearts have not been mentioned).

♠	2
♥	K J 9 6 4 2
♦	7 5 2
♣	A 9 3

You hold this hand and may choose to lead a spade, but equally validly you may choose to lead a heart. You have an entry, and if

partner holds the queen or ace you are in business. So you lead a heart, and dummy has a singleton ace. Your partner plays the ten. Is it encouraging, a singleton, or top of a doubleton?

It is important for your partner to show no emotion. If your partner demonstrably shows interest in your lead, this could unwittingly filter into your thought processes and you may try to cash the suit when in with your ace, persuading yourself that the ten was clearly encouraging. If, on the other hand, partner sighs and slaps the ten down, you will probably play your spade. This is unethical, even though it is unintentional, so it is very important to avoid showing signs of displeasure.



Smile at partner



Better to roar with laughter at big mistakes



Don't endlessly criticise



Don't apologise all the time



Thank partner at the end of the session

# Journey of a bridge player

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

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

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

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

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

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

## MASTER POINT RANKS

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



# Give yourself a chance in the National Handicap Pairs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## National Handicap Pairs Championship

4th September 2022, various locations

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

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

More details at:

[www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/handicap-pairs](http://www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/handicap-pairs)



# GAMES FOR PROGRESSING PLAYERS

## Relaxed 6-high games on BBO



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

**Every Wednesday and Friday at 2pm**  
**- only \$3.50**

*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.*

**For more information:**  
mark@ebedcio.org.uk

## Relaxed 9-high games on BBO



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

**Daily 12-board games only \$2.20**

*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.*

**For more information:**  
www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/events-less-experienced-players or Tel: 01296 317203

Both the English Bridge Union and English Bridge Education and Development are offering games for progressing players (Up to 6 and 9 on the NGS\*) – see left – and look out for other games organised by teachers, clubs and your county. It's a great way to take a step into duplicate bridge – nothing improves play as much as playing! Members who need to buy BB\$ to play in paid games should buy them through the BBO website and not through the app, which often adds on a significant surcharge. Here are testimonials from players who have taken part in games specifically for less-experienced players:

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

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

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

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

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

*Excellent experience, thank you for inviting us to play.*

*Although daunting, the Midlands teams tournaments 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.*

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

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

*\* for details of the NGS see page 70*

One thing that lockdown showed us is that there are more ways to learn and improve your bridge than we ever dreamed of. Many teachers are now back in the classroom with face-to-face lessons, but many continue to offer online courses, so the range of options for learning is greater than ever. You can find lessons at different times to suit your schedule and in different geographical locations. 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:

<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.



**T**he 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 My EBU.

## PROMOTIONS

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

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

## ANNUAL COMPETITION

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

**T**he National Grading Scheme (NGS) measures an individual's current level of performance when playing duplicate bridge.

Unlike the Master Point Scheme (*see p69*), 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 could expect on average if you hypothetically played with a player of the same grade, against a field of average (50) strength.

You can see your grade, how recent results have affected it, and the grade of your different partners and partnerships, on My EBU. Grades are available publicly at [www.ebu.co.uk/ngs](http://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 were dispelled in a historical article at: [www.ebu.co.uk/documents/miscellaneous/ngs/clark-article.pdf](http://www.ebu.co.uk/documents/miscellaneous/ngs/clark-article.pdf) and we have very recent research that confirms this.

# BEST BEHAVIOUR AT BRIDGE



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

Remember that it is rude to criticise your partner or opponents in public, to be less than polite at the table, to gloat over good results or object to a call for the tournament director or to 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.





## ANTALYA FIRST FOR BRIDGE CONGRESS



**5th – 12th October 2022  
Side, Türkiye**

7 nights in 5-star Sense De Luxe Hotel & Spa, a beach-side resort close to Antalya  
Full bridge programme and 2 fantastic excursions included

**Click here for more info**

**PERFECT  
EVENTS FOR  
MASTERS  
AND ABOVE**



## National Handicap Pairs Championship

4th September 2022, various locations

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

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

More details at:

[www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/handicap-pairs](http://www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/handicap-pairs)



## EBU SUMMER MEETING

FLORAL HALL, WINTER GARDENS,  
EASTBOURNE

11th – 14th August 2022

**4 DAYS OF BRIDGE WITH SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE**

Mixed and Open Pairs; Swiss Teams; Swiss Pairs Championship;  
Serious Fast Pairs; Swiss Pairs Lite

### SEE THE BEST OF EASTBOURNE

- Tour 1066 Country with ancient settlements from the Roman to Medieval era
- Take in a show at Eastbourne Theatre
- Stroll along the promenade and pier
- Walk up Beachy Head for spectacular views
- Plenty of restaurants or enjoy fish and chips on the beach



NATIONAL HANDICAP

**JOIN US!  
SCARBOROUGH  
SUMMER  
CONGRESS**

21ST – 24TH  
JULY

SCARBOROUGH  
SPA

visit: [www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/scarborough](http://www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/scarborough)