

**TEST YOUR
BRIDGE TECHNIQUE**

SAFETY PLAYS

David Bird • Tim Bourke

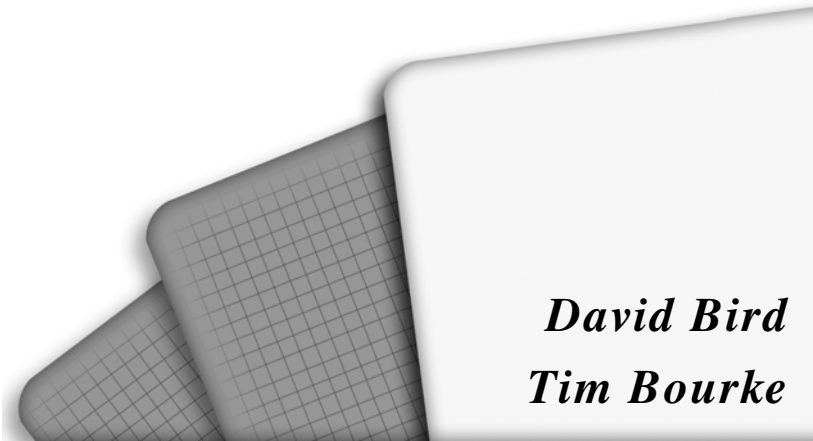
♠ Q 9 6 4 2
♥ A 6 3
♦ 6
♣ K 9 6 5

♥ 10 led

♠ A J 8 7 3
♥ K 4
♦ A 9
♣ A J 4 2

TEST YOUR BRIDGE TECHNIQUE

SAFETY PLAYS



David Bird
Tim Bourke

MASTER POINT PRESS • TORONTO

© 2005 David Bird & Tim Bourke. All rights reserved. It is illegal to reproduce any portion of this material, except by special arrangement with the publisher. Reproduction of this material without authorization, by any duplication process whatsoever, is a violation of copyright.

Master Point Press

331 Douglas Ave.

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

M5M 1H2

(416) 781-0351

Website: www.masterpointpress.com
www.masteringbridge.com
www.ebooksbridge.com
www.bridgeblogging.com

Email: info@masterpointpress.com

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Bird, David, 1946-

Safety plays / David Bird & Tim Bourke.

(Test your bridge technique)

ISBN 978-1-55494-117-9

1. Contract bridge. I. Bourke, Tim II. Title.

III. Series: Bird, David, 1946- Test your bridge technique.

GV1282.435.B573 2005

795.41'53

C2004-906793-1

Editor

Ray Lee

Cover and interior design

Olena S. Sullivan/New Mediatrix

Interior format

Luise Lee

Copy editing

Suzanne Hocking

HOW TO PERFORM A SAFETY PLAY

There are several possible meanings of the term ‘safety play’. In the context of a single suit, it refers to the safest way to obtain the required number of tricks. Look at this spade holding, for example:

♠ A J 6 2



♠ K 7 4

If you need all four spade tricks, you cash the ♠K and then finesse the ♠J. You will succeed when West holds the ♠Q and the suit breaks 3-3. If instead you need only three spade tricks to make your contract, you should employ a safety play. You cash the ♠A and the ♠K and lead towards the jack on the third round if the queen has not already fallen. This is safer than following the original four-trick line because you will now make the contract when East started with ♠Q-x.

A ‘perfect safety play’ within a single suit is one that guarantees success however the defenders’ cards lie. This is an easy example:

♥ A Q 10 7 3



♥ K 9 6 2

To ensure that you score a full five tricks from the suit, you begin by cashing the ace (or queen). If either defender shows up with ♥J-8-5-4, you will be able to finesse against the jack. If you mistakenly cashed the ♥K on the first round, you would lose a trick when East held all four missing hearts.

If you're familiar with that one, you no doubt know this position, which does not offer a perfect safety play:

♥ A Q 9 6 2



♥ K 8 5 4

You cannot pick up the suit without loss if East holds ♥J-10-7-3. To ensure that you are successful when West has this holding, you must cash the ♥K on the first round. With ♥A-Q-9 sitting over West's remaining ♥J-10-7, you will be able to score all five tricks.

The last two examples act as a reminder that there are few general rules when it comes to safety plays. Suppose, for example, that you thought it was a good rule to 'start with an honor from the hand containing two honors'. You would be right on the first combination and wrong on the second.

When the term 'safety play' is used in the context of a whole deal, it merely means the safest way to play a contract — the line that will give you the greatest chance of success. Sometimes this involves spotting an 'extra chance', one that will increase the chance offered by your main line. Here is a straightforward example:

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

West leads the ♣J against your contract of 6♠. You cannot avoid losing a club trick and it may seem that you will have to rely on the heart finesse. Quite possibly you will, but there is a small extra chance that you can investigate first. Suppose East wins the first trick and returns a diamond. You win with the ♦A, draw trumps and cash the ♦K, the ♦J falling from West. It costs you nothing to cross to the ♣Q and ruff a third round of diamonds. West's queen tumbles to the baize and your ♦10 is good! You can discard your heart loser and make the slam without having to take the heart finesse.

As you see, this was an 'extra chance'. If neither defender turned out to hold ♦Q-J-x, as would usually be the case, you would fall back on the heart finesse.

Sometimes you do best to start with the second-best play in one suit — one that does not risk losing the lead and allowing the defenders to cash a winner. If the first chance does not pay off, you pursue a chance in a different suit. By combining these two chances, you increase the total prospect of making the contract. On this next deal you combine the second-best play in the trump suit with the chance of obtaining a discard on one of the side suits:

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

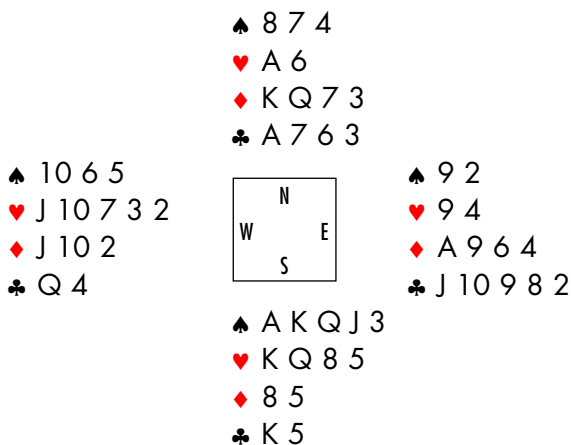
West leads the ♠K against your small slam in hearts. You win with the ♠A and must now decide how to play the trump suit. Normally you would cash the ace and then finesse the jack. This is the play that gives

you the best chance of scoring six trump tricks. However, it's not the best idea when considering the contract as a whole. If you take a trump finesse and it loses, West will put you down two by cashing two spade tricks. A safer line of play is to start by cashing the ace and king of trumps. This is the second-best way to play the trumps, looking at that suit in isolation. If it fails, though, you will still be on lead and can seek a second chance — you may be able to throw your spade losers on dummy's diamond suit.

When the cards lie as in the diagram, the ♥Q will not fall in two rounds. However, when you turn to diamonds, West will have to follow to three rounds and you will have time to throw both your spade losers.

The best chance in the trump suit alone (to play the ♥A and finesse the ♥J) gives you a 40% chance of picking up the trumps without loss. Playing the ♥A and ♥K instead only gives you a 33% chance of doing so; however, this leaves you with such a high probability of being able to discard both your spade losers that the combined chance comes to a substantial 63%.

Another form of safety play involves minimizing the risk of an adverse ruff. Would you have spotted the winning play on this deal?



You bid to a small slam in spades and West leads the ♦J, covered by the king and ace. How will you play when East returns the ♣J?

You win the club switch and see that a heart ruff will bring your total to twelve tricks. You cannot draw all the trumps before taking the heart ruff, of course, because this would exhaust dummy's trumps. Suppose you play the ace and king of hearts immediately and ruff a low heart in dummy. Hearts break 5-2 and East will overruff with the ♠9. Unlucky, yes, but there was no need to go down! As you no doubt realized, you lose nothing by drawing two rounds of trumps before taking the heart ruff. By good fortune this removes East's trump holding. When you ruff the third heart, East will not be able to overruff.

This was another example of an extra-chance play. Your main chance of success was that hearts would break 4-3 and that both defenders would have to follow as you ruffed the third round of hearts. The extra chance was that a defender would have only two hearts but you could still achieve your ruff because he held only two trumps.

Well, you get the general idea. Safety plays may involve a single suit or your overall plan for playing a contract. The purpose is always to maximize your chance of making the contract. Sometimes you have to surrender the chance of an extra 20 or 30 for an overtrick in order to give yourself a greater chance of the main prize – the game or slam bonus.

We're nearing the time when you can test your own ability in this area. Nervous, are you? There is no need to be. No one is watching and if you do happen to miss the best line in some slam there will be no need to offer an explanation to your teammates! If any problem proves too tricky, the answer will be explained on the pages that follow. Next time you venture to the bridge table, you will surely find that your play is considerably safer than it was previously. Good luck!

Problem 1 [To Solution](#)

♥ 10 led

♠ Q 9 6 4 2
 ♥ A 6 3
 ♦ 6
 ♣ K 9 6 5

♠ A J 8 7 3
 ♥ K 4
 ♦ A 9
 ♣ A J 4 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♠
pass	4 ♦ *	pass	6 ♠
all pass			

West leads the ♥ 10. What is your plan for maximum safety?

Problem 2 [To Solution](#)

♦ K led

♠ J 3
 ♥ A Q 7
 ♦ A 9 7 3 2
 ♣ K 7 3

♠ A Q 8 7 6 2
 ♥ K 5 4
 ♦ 6
 ♣ A Q 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♠
pass	2 ♦	pass	3 ♠
pass	4NT	pass	5 ♠
pass	6 ♠	all pass	

West leads the ♦ K: plan the play.

Problem 3

To Solution

♥ 10 led

♠ J 9 4 2

♥ A K 4

♦ A Q 6

♣ A 8 4

♠ A Q 8 5

♥ Q J 8 3

♦ K 4 2

♣ K 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	6NT	all pass	1NT

West leads the ♥10 against 6NT. How will you play the contract?

Problem 4

To Solution

♠ 4 led

♠ 7 3

♥ A K 9 5

♦ A J

♣ A J 10 8 7

♠ A K 5

♥ 7 3 2

♦ 7 6 5 2

♣ Q 4 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♣	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♠4 and East plays the ♠J. How will you play?

	N	
W		E
	S	

North's splinter bid of 4♦ shows a sound game raise with at most one diamond. How will you play the slam when West leads the ♥10?

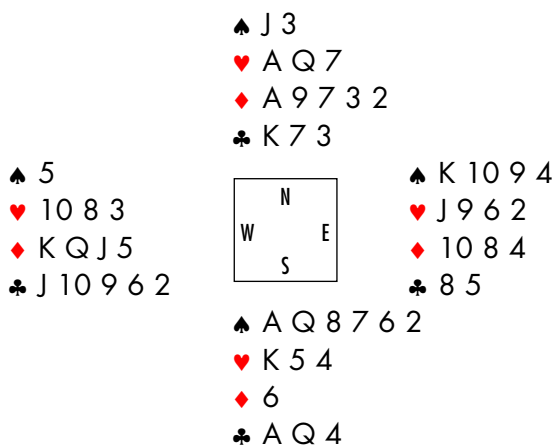
What is the best play in clubs? It depends on what happened in trumps. If you lost a trump trick (either because West held the ♠K or because you missed the safety play against K-10-x), you cannot afford a club loser. When aiming for a full four club tricks, the safety play is a low card to the jack on the first round. Note that it would be a

mistake to cash the ♣K first. This would not help you against a singleton ♣Q with West — you would still have to lose a club trick — and it would cost you the contract when East held the singleton ♣Q.

If you manage to pick up the trumps for no loser, there is in fact a ‘perfect safety play’ that will guarantee the three club tricks that you need for the contract. Cash the ♣A on the first round and then lead towards the ♣K-9-6, intending to finesse the ♣9 if West follows with a low spot card. If West shows out on the second round, rise with the ♣K and lead back towards your ♣J.

Alternatively, you could cash the ♣4 and lead towards the jack to guarantee three tricks, but this needlessly loses a trick when West was dealt ♣Q-x.

To Problem SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 2



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♠
pass	2 ♦	pass	3 ♠
pass	4NT	pass	5 ♠
pass	6 ♠	all pass	

West leads the ♦K against your spade slam. What is your plan for maximum safety?

The side suits are solid and you can therefore concentrate your entire effort on determining the safest play in the trump suit, where you can afford just one loser. What is it to be? With many similar combinations you do best to cash the ace first. It doesn't look very promising here. If you drop a singleton ♠K, all will be well. Apart from that case, you will usually lose two trump tricks when the suit breaks 4-1. (You might manage to recover with a trump coup when West holds a singleton ♠10 or ♠9.)

How about leading dummy's ♠3 to your ♠Q on the first round? If West holds a singleton ♠10 or ♠9, you could succeed by leading the ♠J on the next round. Given the layout in the diagram, however, you will go down. East's remaining ♠K-10-9 will be worth two tricks.

The best play is to lead dummy's ♠J on the first round. If West wins with the ♠K, you will need a 3-2 spade break. When the cards lie as in the diagram, the ♠J will be covered by the king and ace. Only the ♠5 falls from West and you re-enter dummy to lead the second round of trumps. When East produces the ♠4 over dummy's ♠3, the safety play is to cover with your ♠6. West shows out and you lose just one trump trick to East's remaining ♠10-9. If the deep finesse of the ♠6 had lost, the suit would be breaking 3-2, allowing you to draw the last trump with your queen.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	6NT	all pass	1NT

With 4-3-3-3 shape and enough points for 6NT, North sees no benefit in looking for a 4-4 spade fit. He raises directly to 6NT and West leads the ♥10. How will you play the contract?

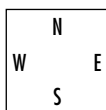
There are nine top tricks outside spades, so you will need to score three additional tricks from the spade suit. What is the best safety play? As we mentioned on the previous problem, it sometimes works best to cash the ace first. Suppose you try that here and two lowly spot-cards appear. You will then have to guess whether to lead towards the jack or the queen on the next round. When a defender does hold ♠K-10-x-x you will have only a 50% chance of guessing right.

It is better to lead a low spade from dummy on the first round, finessing the queen. If this loses to the king, you will cash the ace on the second round, catching the three K-10-x-x combinations with West and paying out only to a singleton king. Suppose instead that the ♠Q wins. What then?

Cashing the ace next is no good because you will lose two spade tricks when East holds ♠K-10-x-x. Instead you should cross to dummy and lead a low card towards your hand, planning to finesse the ♠8 if East does not split his honors.

If instead it was West who cleverly held up on the first round from ♠K-10-x-x, you will be able to rise with the ace and lead to dummy's ♠J on the third round.

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



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♠4 against your notrump game, East playing the ♠J. How will you play the contract?

You have six tricks on top and it seems that the club suit will provide at least three further tricks to bring your total to nine. You should not hold up in spades because a diamond switch will put the contract at risk. After winning the first trick, how should you tackle the club suit for maximum safety?

The original declarer led the ♣Q at Trick 2. He soon regretted it! When West showed out there was no way to make the contract. One safe route to four club tricks is to play a club to the ace. When clubs are not 5-0, you simply force out the ♣K. If West shows out on the first round of clubs, you will run the ♣8 through East on the second round. If instead East shows out on the first club, you will continue with a club to the queen. A subsequent finesse of dummy's ♣8 will give you the four club tricks that you need.

When West follows on the first round of clubs, the very best play is to finesse dummy's jack (or the ♣10). This again guarantees four club tricks. It will also allow you to score all five club tricks (for an over-trick) when West started with a doubleton king in the suit.

If you are the sort who can resist anything but temptation, you can return to your hand with a spade honor and repeat the club finesse. Let's hope that East did not hold up the ♣K!

Problem 5 [To Solution](#)

♠ J 9 3
 ♥ 6 3 2
 ♦ 6 5 3 2
 ♣ 10 3 2
 ♠ K led
 ♠ —
 ♥ A K J 10 9 7
 ♦ A J 10 4
 ♣ A K 7

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♠*	pass	3♠	4♥
all pass			

You ruff the spade lead and draw trumps in two rounds. How will you play the contract for maximum safety?

Problem 6 [To Solution](#)

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1NT
pass	2♣	pass	2♦
pass	3♥*	pass	3♠
pass	6♠	all pass	

How will you play when East wins with the ♣A and a club is returned?

Problem 7

To Solution

♠ 9 8 5
♥ A 6
♦ A K 8 4
♣ K 7 4 2

♦ J led

♠ A Q 10 7 6 3
♥ K 10 5
♦ 6
♣ A 8 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♠
pass	2 ♣	pass	3 ♠
pass	4 NT	pass	5 ♠
pass	6 ♠	all pass	

What is the safest line in 6♠ when West leads the ♦ J?

Problem 8

To Solution

♠ A 10 4
♥ K 10 5
♦ A 9 6 4 2
♣ A 9

♠ 6 led

♠ K Q J 9 5 3
♥ 8 6 4 2
♦ J
♣ 3 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			2 ♠ *
pass	4 ♠	all pass	

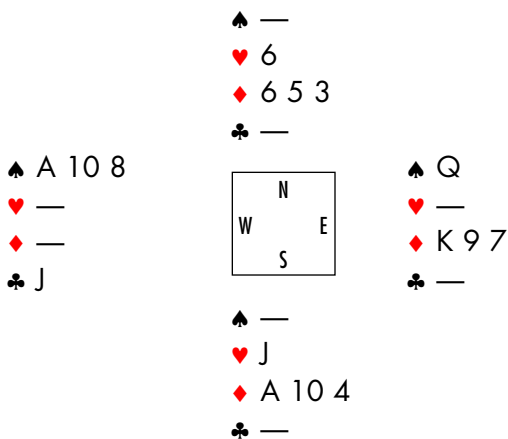
How will you play when West leads the ♠ 6?

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♠*	pass	3♠	4♥
all pass			

West leads the ♠K against your heart game. Partner apologizes for his dummy and you ruff in the South hand. When you play the ace and king of trumps you are rewarded with a 2-2 break. How will you play for maximum safety from this point?

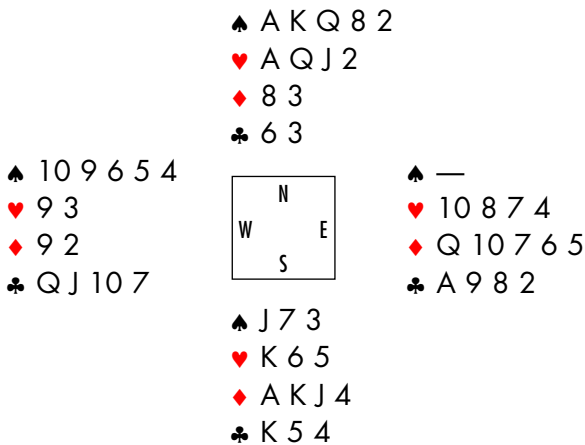
Only a 4-1 or 5-0 diamond break can put your contract at risk. Rather than test this suit immediately, you should play ace, king and another club. The defender who wins is likely to play another spade (a diamond return would help you, allowing you to take a finesse). You ruff the spade exit in your hand and lead the jack of diamonds. East wins with an honor and cannot play another diamond or you will guarantee the contract with a finesse of the ten. He will have to play a third round of spades, which you ruff in the South hand. These cards will be left:



You now exit with the ♦4. East wins with the ♦7 and is endplayed. He will either have to lead into your ♦A-10 or give you a ruff-and-sluff.

A heart lead or a low club lead would have beaten the contract. With no entries to dummy, you could not then have arranged the removal of all dummy's spades. East would have had a safe spade exit when you threw him in with a second round of diamonds.

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 6



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1NT
pass	2♣	pass	2♦
pass	3♥*	pass	3♠
pass	6♠	all pass	

North uses the Smolen convention to show five spades and four hearts. How will you play the slam when West leads the ♣Q to East's ♣A and a club is returned to your king?

The club lead has solved your problem in the minors, so all now depends on not losing a trump trick. Only a 5-0 break can threaten the slam. You can deal with this situation, provided it is West who holds the trump length. At Trick 3 you should cash the ♠J. When East shows out, continue with a low trump towards dummy. If West splits his honors, win the trick and return to your hand to take a further trump finesse.

That wasn't too difficult, so let's consider another scenario. This time West makes a neutral lead in hearts, giving nothing away. You win in the dummy and let's say that the trumps break 3-2. How will you play the slam after this start?

You have eleven top tricks and can make the contract either by leading a club towards the king or by finessing the ♦J. It is best to combine two chances. Play the ace and king of diamonds and ruff a diamond, hoping to bring down the queen. If the ♦Q fails to appear, you will lead towards the ♣K.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♠
pass	2 ♣	pass	3 ♠
pass	4NT	pass	5 ♠
pass	6 ♠	all pass	

South felt he was too strong for a 2♠ rebid when his partner responded in clubs. Had North's response been 2♦, he would have rebid just 2♠. How will you play 6♠ when West leads the ♦J?

The original declarer won in the dummy and played a trump to the queen. This line of play would yield an overtrick if East held a doubleton king of trumps or if West held a singleton jack. Unfortunately for declarer, the trump queen lost to West's king. West persevered with a second round of diamonds, won in the dummy. When declarer led a second round of trumps, East produced an unhelpful four-spot. Should declarer finesse or not? It is a complete guess! The odds of West holding king-jack doubleton are almost the same as those of a singleton king. After much mental effort (too late in the day) declarer rose with the ♠A and went down one.

When you can afford to lose one trump trick but not two, the safety play is to cash the ace of trumps on the first round. You can then cross to dummy and lead towards the remaining honors on the second round. Here the safety play would have brought an unexpected overtrick.

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 8

♠ 8 7 6 ♥ A Q J 9 ♦ 7 3 ♣ K J 7 5	♠ A 10 4 ♥ K 10 5 ♦ A 9 6 4 2 ♣ A 9 N E W S ♠ K Q J 9 5 3 ♥ 8 6 4 2 ♦ J ♣ 3 2	♠ 2 ♥ 7 3 ♦ K Q 10 8 5 ♣ Q 10 8 6 4	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	4♠	all pass	2♠*

North's direct raise to game was on the ambitious side. How will you play the spade game when West leads the ♠6?

You will need the ♥A to be onside. Even if this is the case, you will still have to worry about the fourth round of hearts. A 3-3 heart break will rescue you. So will a 2-2 trump break, since you will then be able to ruff the fourth round of hearts in dummy. Can you spot a safety play that will protect you against an unfavorable break in both the major suits?

You must play on dummy reversal lines, which is very unusual in a 6-3 fit. After winning the trump lead in your hand, you cross to the $\heartsuit A$ and ruff a diamond low. You continue with a heart to West's queen and the king. When you ruff a third round of diamonds high, West shows out. A club to the ace permits another high diamond ruff and you return to dummy with the $\spadesuit 10$ to ruff dummy's last diamond high. Nine tricks are before you and dummy's $\spadesuit A$ will make it ten.

To gain a trick by reversing the dummy you need to ruff in the long-trump hand until it has fewer trumps than the short-trump hand. Since trumps started 6-3 here, you had to take four ruffs in the long-trump hand. As a result, you scored three side-suit winners, three trump tricks and four ruffs. A total of ten!

Problem 9 [To Solution](#)

♥2 led

♠ 8 6 2
 ♥ 8 7 6 5 3
 ♦ 7 6
 ♣ A K 6

♠ A Q J 7 5 3
 ♥ Q 4
 ♦ A K
 ♣ Q 10 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♠
pass	2 ♠	pass	4 ♠
all pass			

East wins with the ♥K and plays the ♥A, West throwing a club. You ruff the next heart with the ♠Q, West ditching another club. What now?

Problem 10 [To Solution](#)

♥7 led

♠ Q 9 6 4
 ♥ Q 6 4
 ♦ 7 5
 ♣ A J 6 2

♠ A K
 ♥ K 3
 ♦ A J 6 4
 ♣ Q 9 8 5 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♣
pass	1 ♠	pass	2 ♦
pass	2 ♥	dbl	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♥7, covered by the ♥4 and ♥9. How will you play?

Problem 11 [To Solution](#)

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1 ♣	pass	1 ♠
pass	2 ♠	pass	4 ♠
all pass			

West leads the ♦ Q against 4 ♠. How will you play the contract?

Problem 12 [To Solution](#)

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			2 ♣
pass	2NT	pass	3 ♠
pass	3NT	pass	4 ♠
pass	6 ♠	all pass	

West leads the ♣ 10 against 6 ♠. What is your plan?

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♠
pass	2 ♠	pass	4 ♠
all pass			

A simple auction carries you to 4♠ and West leads the ♥2. East wins with the ♥K and continues with the ♥A, West discarding a club. When East persists with a third round of hearts you ruff with the queen and West throws another club. How will you continue?

The original declarer went down. He crossed to dummy with the ♣A and led a trump, finessing the jack. West won with the trump king and gave his partner a club ruff for one down.

It was clever defense by West to refuse to overruff at Trick 3. Such an action would have been obvious from ♠K-10-x since he could see that this would promote a second trump trick for himself. Similarly, it would be clear not to overruff from ♠K-9-x because East might hold a singleton ♠10. With his actual ♠K-9 West followed general principles in refusing to overruff from a natural trump trick.

Let's look next at declarer's play. Would you say he was at fault? Yes, indeed! He should have cashed the ♠A before crossing to dummy with a club to lead a second round of trumps. This sort of safety play is normally made to avoid losing a trick to a singleton ♠K offside. Such a position was unlikely here because West would surely have over-ruffed with a singleton ♠K. The potential advantage was that declarer could draw two rounds of trumps and in this way reduce the risk of an adverse club ruff.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♣
pass	1♠	pass	2♦
pass	2♥	dbl	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

A rebid of 3♣ by North would not have been forcing in the system being played. North therefore bid the fourth suit and East took advantage with a lead-directing double. How will you play 3NT when the ♥7 is led, East playing the ♥9?

If hearts were 6-2 and West subsequently might gain the lead (for example, if the main finesse was into the West hand), it might be right to hold up in hearts. Your aim would be to exhaust West's cards in the suit. This is not the case here. Firstly, West's lead of the ♥7 (second-best from a poor suit), combined with East's ♥9, suggests that West is leading from ♥8-7-x. Secondly, the club finesse is into the East hand.

So, you should win the first trick with the ♥K. West is now the danger hand, so you must look for a safety play in clubs that will prevent West from gaining the lead.

At Trick 2 you should lead the queen of clubs from your hand, intending to run the card. West covers with the king and you win with dummy's ace. It would be fatal to play the ♣J next, since West would win the third round of clubs and play a second heart. Instead you should cross to a spade and run the ♣9 into the safe hand.

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 11



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1 ♣	pass	1 ♠
pass	2 ♠	pass	4 ♠
all pass			

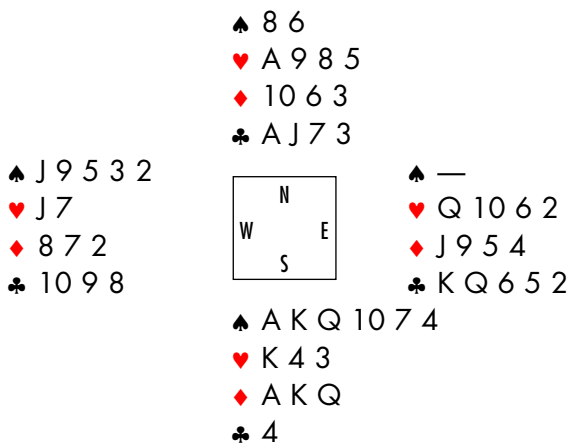
West leads the $\heartsuit Q$ against $4\spadesuit$. How will you play the contract?

When the deal was originally played, declarer won the diamond lead in his hand and played a trump. West rose with the ace and persisted with the ♦J. Declarer covered with dummy's king and was about to claim the contract when East ruffed.

Declarer won the trump return, West following, and saw that there was a possible elimination play. He played three rounds of clubs, followed by the ace and king of hearts. He then exited with a third round of hearts. If East had won the trick he would have been forced to play a heart or a club, giving a ruff-and-sluff. As the cards lay, though, West was able to win the third round of hearts. He cashed a diamond winner and the contract was down one.

Declarer's mistake was to win the opening lead in the wrong hand. Winning with the ♦A would be the winning play only if West had led a singleton ♦Q. Apart from the fact that West might well choose not to lead a singleton honor, it was a much less likely holding than a singleton 2, 4, 6, 9 or 10 with East. Instead, declarer should win with dummy's ♦K after which a diamond ruff by East can do no damage. East would be ruffing a diamond loser.

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 12



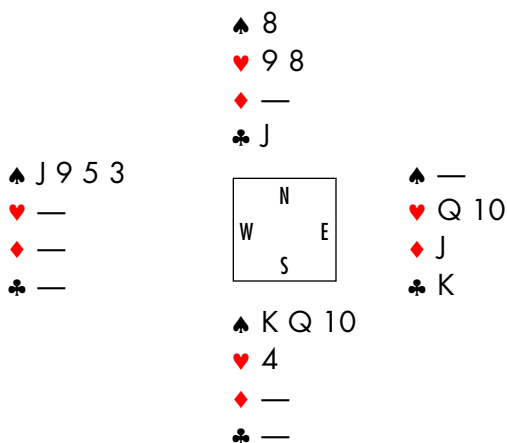
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			2♣
pass	2NT	pass	3♠
pass	3NT	pass	4♠
pass	6♠	all pass	

West leads the ♣10 against your small slam in spades and you win with dummy's ace. What now?

You have an almost certain loser in hearts and cannot afford to lose a trump trick too. Is the contract doomed if West has ♠J-x-x-x, or even ♠J-9-x-x-x? Not necessarily. If you can take two club ruffs in your hand, you may be able to draw two rounds of trumps, cash your side-suit winners and then exit at Trick 11. If West has to win the trick, he will to lead into your ♠Q-10.

Suppose, after winning the club lead with the ace, you play a trump and East shows out. Your thoughts may turn towards ruffing two clubs in your hand, to prepare for the endplay, but it will be too late! Only one entry to the dummy will remain.

Just in case West has four or five trumps to the jack, you must ruff a club at Trick 2. When you play the ace of trumps next, East shows out. You cash your red-suit winners and ruff another club, appreciative of your luck when West follows all the while. These cards will remain:



You exit with the ♥4 and West has to ruff his partner's heart winner. His trump return is into your tenace and the small slam is made.

What would your chances have been if West had started with four spades to the jack, rather than five spades? Strangely, they would have been worse. You would have succeeded only when West had to win the heart exit and lead from his remaining ♠J-9 into your ♠Q-10. A strong defender in the West seat would have unblocked the queen from ♥Q-x-x, or the queen and jack from ♥Q-J-x, to avoid the endplay.

Problem 13

To Solution

♠ 3 led

♠ 8 7 2

♥ A J 9 8 2

♦ 9 7 4

♣ K 5

♠ A Q

♥ 7 4

♦ A J 5

♣ A Q 9 8 7 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♣
pass	1 ♥	1 ♠	2 NT
pass	3 NT	all pass	

West leads the ♠3, East playing the ♠K. How will you play?

Problem 14

To Solution

♣ Q led

♠ 10 8 7 4

♥ A 8 6 3

♦ K Q

♣ A K 9

♠ A K 6 3

♥ Q 5

♦ A 7 6 4 3 2

♣ 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♦
pass	1 ♥	pass	1 ♠
pass	4 NT	pass	5 ♦ *
pass	6 ♠	all pass	

How will you play after West leads the ♣Q? Try to foresee various lies of the trump suit and how this will affect your play.

Problem 15

To Solution

♣6 led

♠ K 7 5 4 2

♥ 9 6 5 3

♦ K 5

♣ K 8

♠ A 8

♥ A K

♦ A J 8 6 4 2

♣ Q 5 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♦
pass	1♠	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♣6 and dummy’s ♣K wins the first trick. What now?

Problem 16

To Solution

♠J led

♠ A 8 7

♥ Q 9 5 4 3

♦ Q 9 3

♣ Q 3

♠ Q 4

♥ A 10 7 6 2

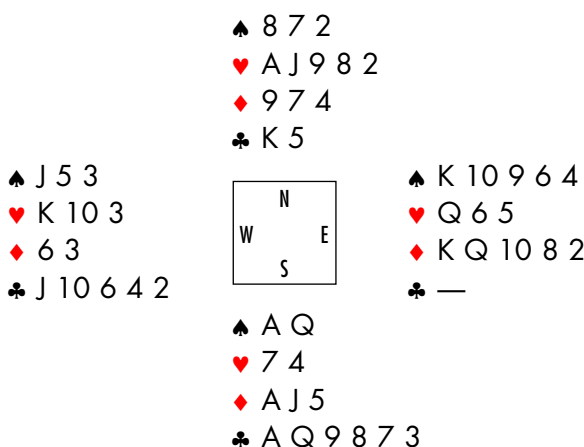
♦ A K 8 6 5

♣ K

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

How will you play for maximum safety when West leads the ♠J?

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 13



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♣
pass	1 ♥	1 ♠	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

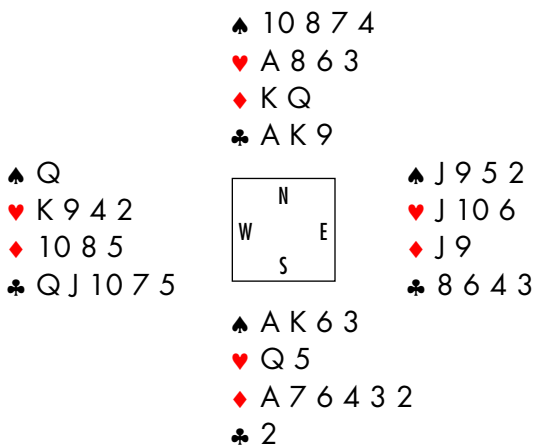
West leads the ♠3 against your game in notrumps and you win East's king with the ace. How will you play?

You have seven top tricks and need to develop two more from the club suit. What will happen if clubs break 4-1? That causes no problem. You can simply give up a club trick and score five clubs and four outside winners. The only danger to the contract is that clubs break 5-0. To counter this possibility, lead the ♣9 from your hand at Trick 2. If West follows with a low card, play the ♣5 from dummy. When the cards lie as in the diagram (as they did during a European championship), your ♣9 will win. You can then cross to the ♣K, return to your hand with the ♠Q and concede a club trick to West. The ace of diamonds remains as an entry to your hand. The defenders, meanwhile, will score just one club and three spades.

Suppose instead that West shows out on the first round of clubs. You will then rise with dummy's ♣K and lead a low club towards your hand. Whether or not East chooses to split his honors, you will score five club tricks and make the contract.

Sweden's Per-Olof Sundelin played in the manner we have described and landed his contract.

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 14



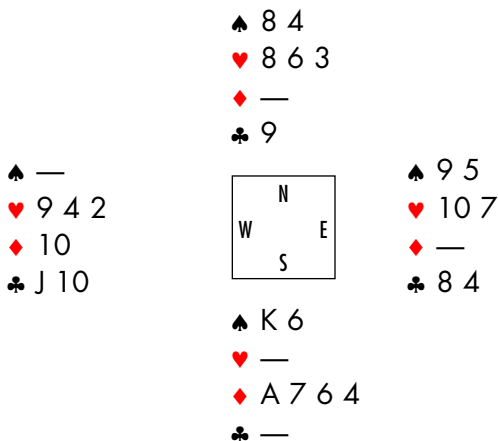
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 
pass	1 	pass	1 
pass	4NT	pass	5  *
pass	6 	all pass	

South's 1430 response to Roman Keycard Blackwood showed three (or zero) keycards. How will you play the slam when West leads the $\clubsuit Q$?

Your potential heart loser can be thrown on the ♣K, so the action will center on the trump suit. If trumps break 3-2, you may be able to ruff a diamond and overcome a 4-1 diamond break. If trumps are 4-1, you must take steps to avoid two trump losers, also to avoid a blockage in the suit.

After winning with the ♣A you should lead the ♠7 (unblocking a middle card) to your ♠A. When the ♠Q appears from West, the risk of a 4-1 trump break is obvious. If you play the ♠K next you will lose two trump tricks. Instead you should lead the ♠3 to dummy's ♠10. West shows out and East wins with the ♠J. East's ♥J return is covered by the

queen, king and ace. You discard your heart loser on the ♣K and play dummy's two diamond honors, everyone following. These cards remain:



All that remains now is to pick up East's trumps with a finesse and score the good diamonds. You lead the ♠4 for a finesse of the ♠6 and... do you? A skilled defender in the East seat can defeat you. He will insert the ♠9 and you will be forced to win with the ♠K. Since a second round of trumps would now be won with dummy's ♠8, the best you can do is to run your diamonds for down one.

To avoid such an embarrassment, you must lead the ♠8 in the position shown in the diagram. Whether or not East covers with the ♠9, you will be able to win the fourth round of trumps in your hand and claim the contract.

Note how necessary it was to unblock a middle trump under your ace on the first round of the suit. If the dummy still had ♠8-7 in the end position, East could always beat you by covering with the ♠9 on the third round of trumps. The same line of play would also succeed against a singleton ♠9 with West.

Let's go back to Trick 2 and consider some different lies of the trump suit. If the ♠2 or ♠5 appears from West on the first round of

trumps, you should play the $\spadesuit K$ and $\spadesuit Q$ next. When trumps are 3-2, you can overcome a 4-1 diamond break if the player with one diamond also holds three trumps. He will be ruffing from his natural trump trick and you will be able to draw trumps in two rounds before taking a diamond ruff yourself.

Finally, suppose that the $\heartsuit Q$ or $\heartsuit J$ appears from East on the first round of trumps. You should then continue with a trump towards dummy in case West holds four trumps to an honor.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♦
pass	1 ♠	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♣6 against 3NT. How will you plan the play?

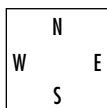
You should play the ♣K from dummy. The king wins and you then have seven top tricks. Where should you seek two extra tricks? A 3-3 spade break would give you the tricks you need but unless West holds ♠Q-J-x the defenders will probably arrange for East to win the third round. He would then lead through your ♣Q.

It is better to seek the extra tricks in diamonds and you must aim to set them up without allowing East, the danger hand, to gain the lead. When the deal was originally played, declarer played the ♦K at Trick 2, dropping the singleton ♦Q from West. When he led a second round of diamonds, East inserted the ♦10. It was no longer possible to make the game! Whether declarer persisted with diamonds or turned to the spades, East would gain the lead and revert to clubs.

To guard against a singleton ♦Q with West, you must lead the first round of diamonds from the South hand. So, cross to a heart or a spade and lead a low diamond. When the ♦Q appears from West, allow it to win. An overtrick is on the way!

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 16

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



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	4♥	all pass	1♥

With five-card trump support, North is worth a raise to 4♥. How will you play this contract for maximum safety when West leads the ♠J?

You can afford to lose one spade, one trump and one club. What safety play will be required in trumps to restrict the potential losers to one? You must lead a low trump from dummy and finesse the ten if East produces the ♥8. If West wins with the jack or king, you will be able to draw the outstanding trump with your ace on the next round.

So, you should win the spade lead with dummy's ace and lead a low trump. If East plays the ♥8, you will finesse the ♥10 successfully, cash the ♥A and claim ten tricks. If East follows with the jack or king of trumps instead, you will win with the ace and play a second trump. The only other possibility is that East will show out. In that case rise with the ace and lead a second round towards dummy.

You may wonder why you shouldn't run the spade to your hand at Trick 1. The potential problem is that East may win with the ♠K, cash the ♣A and switch to a diamond. It would then be too dangerous to follow the safety play of a trump to the ten. West might win with a singleton ♥J or ♥K and give his partner a diamond ruff!

Problem 17.....[To Solution](#)

♥9 led

♠ K 8
 ♥ J 3
 ♦ A J 9
 ♣ Q 10 8 7 5 2

♠ A J 9 6 5 3
 ♥ 10 2
 ♦ K Q 7 6
 ♣ A

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	4♠	3♥ all pass	3♠

West leads the ♥9 and East cashes two tricks in the suit. At Trick 3 he switches to the ♣4. How will you play the contract?

Problem 18.....[To Solution](#)

♥K led

♠ Q 7 6 4
 ♥ A 6 3
 ♦ 9 4
 ♣ A K 9 6

♠ A K J 10 5
 ♥ 7
 ♦ A K Q J 5
 ♣ 7 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
pass	2♣	pass	2♦
pass	4♠	pass	4NT
pass	5♠*	pass	7♠
all pass			

How will you play the grand slam when West leads the ♥K?

Problem 19

[To Solution](#)

♠ A 6
♥ K Q 4
♦ Q 9 8 6 3 2
♣ Q 7

♠ K led

♠ 10 9 7 2
♥ A J 10 9 2
♦ A K
♣ A K

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	pass	1♥
pass	2♦	pass	2♠
pass	4♥	pass	4NT
pass	5♠*	pass	7♥
all pass			

West leads the ♠K against your grand slam. How will you play?

Problem 20

[To Solution](#)

♠ Q 4
♥ J 4
♦ K J 10 3
♣ K 10 8 6 2

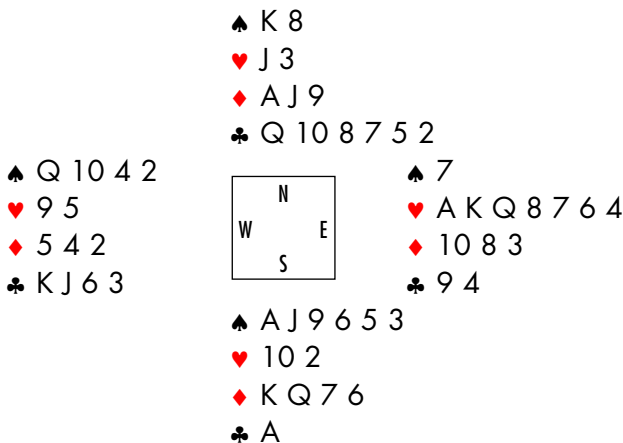
♠ K led

♠ 9
♥ A K 10 9 6 2
♦ Q 8 5
♣ A 7 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♥
1♠	dbl*	3♠	4♥
all pass			

West leads the ♠K followed by the ♠A. How will you play?

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 17



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		3♥	3♠
pass	4♠	all pass	

West leads the ♥9 against your spade game and East cashes two tricks in the suit. At Trick 3 he switches to the ♣4. How will you play the contract for maximum safety?

You must look for the best play in the trump suit, bearing in mind that East holds seven hearts to his partner's two and is therefore more likely to be short in trumps. Beginning with dummy's ♠K is not much good. You will go down when West holds ♠Q-10-x-x. Playing the ♠A first is just as bad, of course.

How about a first-round finesse of the ♠8? It's not a bad line because you would lose two trump tricks only when East holds a singleton ♠10. This line would succeed against the layout in our diagram. West would have to split his honors to prevent dummy's ♠8 from winning and you would then lose only one trump trick to the queen. (West should not split his honors, in practice, because East might hold a singleton ♠9. Or declarer might not be intending to finesse the ♠8.)

Another possibility is to run the ♠J on the first round. That's pretty good too. It would lose only to a singleton ♠Q with East.

Which do you think is better, running the ♠J or finessing the ♠8? On the face of it the two lines are equally good, each losing only to one specific singleton with East. Since many players would not open 3♥ with 11 points (even if these included a singleton ♠Q), it is slightly better to run the ♠J.

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 18

♠ Q 7 6 4
♥ A 6 3
♦ 9 4
♣ A K 9 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♠
pass	2 ♣	pass	2 ♦
pass	4 ♠	pass	4NT
pass	5 ♠ *	pass	7 ♠
all pass			

West leads the ♥K against your grand slam. How will you play?

The play looks trivially easy and it is at such moments that you must ask yourself what could possibly go wrong. Diamonds would have to break 5-1 or worse to cause a problem but unless the trumps are 4-0 as well, you will be able to draw trumps and ruff your diamond loser in dummy. So, the question is: what safety play will allow you to make the contract even when diamonds are 5-1 and trumps are 4-0?

Since you will not be able to ruff a diamond in dummy, you must ruff two hearts in the South hand instead. After winning the first trick with the ♥A, ruff a heart in your hand with the ♠5. Play the ace of trumps, revealing the feared 4-0 break, and draw two more rounds of trumps with the king and jack. Return to dummy with the ♣A and ruff

dummy's last heart loser with the ♠10. Finally return to dummy with the ♣K to draw East's last trump. You can then throw dummy's two club losers on the third and fourth round of diamonds.

It's true that you would suffer a ruff if East held a singleton club. The defenders hold seven clubs, however, and only six diamonds. A club singleton is therefore less likely than a diamond singleton.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	pass	1♥
pass	2♦	pass	2♠
pass	4♥	pass	4NT
pass	5♠*	pass	7♥
all pass			

West leads the ♠K against your grand slam in hearts. How will you play?

With the spade entry to the dummy removed, you will have to rely on the trump suit to give you an entry to the long cards in the blocked diamond suit. How should you give yourself the best chance?

Suppose you draw two rounds of trumps with the king and ace, intending to play the diamond ace-king and then return to the dummy with the trump queen. It's no good! The 4-1 trump break will defeat you.

You need the diamonds to break 3-2, it's true, but you don't necessarily need trumps to be 3-2. You can survive when East has four trumps. Play the ♥A, cash the two top diamonds and cross to dummy

with the ♥K. When West shows out, you play winning diamonds through East. If he ruffs at any stage, you will overruff and return to dummy with the ♥Q. This will draw East's last trump and allow you to enjoy dummy's remaining diamonds. If instead East declines to ruff at any stage, you will throw your three spade losers. You can then cash dummy's ♥Q and cross to your hand with a spade ruff to draw East's last trump. The technique is called 'using a side suit as substitute trumps.'

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 20

♠ Q 4
♥ J 4
♦ K J 10 3
♣ K 10 8 6 2

1 ♠
all pass

You reach game in hearts and West leads the $\spadesuit K$ followed by the $\spadesuit A$. How will you play the contract?

At a cursory glance, it may seem that you can lose no more than one spade, one heart and one diamond (the losing club can be discarded on the diamonds). However, there is a risk of losing trump control when one of the defenders holds four trumps. You ruff the spade continuation at Trick 2 and are down to five trumps already. You may have to lose the lead twice more, to the ♥Q and the ♦A, and you can be sure that the defenders will continue to force you. What is the solution to this dilemma?

Suppose you play the ace and king of trumps, East showing out on the second round. Whether you play the ♥10 next or turn your attention to the diamonds, the defenders will win and force you. You will lose trump control. How about clearing the diamonds before drawing any trumps, leaving dummy's ♥J-4 to protect you against a further force in spades? It will not work against strong defenders because East will note

his partner's count signal of the ♦9 and hold up the ♦A for one round, threatening to give his partner a ruff in the suit.

There is only one sound safety play. After ruffing the second spade, you must lead a trump towards the ♥J. If West rises with the ♥Q he cannot force the long trump hand because dummy's ♥J is available for ruffing. If instead West ducks on the first round of trumps, you will simply draw two more rounds of trumps and knock out the ♦A.

This is an important technique to master: when you are threatened with losing trump control, aim to use the short trump holding (usually in dummy) to protect yourself.

Problem 21.....[To Solution](#)

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♠
pass	3 ♠	pass	4NT
pass	5 ♥*	pass	6 ♠
all pass			

West leads the ♥Q against your slam. What is your plan to cater for a bad trump break?

Problem 22.....[To Solution](#)

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	2NT	pass	3 ♥*
pass	3 ♠	pass	5 ♥
pass	6 ♥	all pass	

How will you play the heart slam when West leads the ♥5?

Problem 23

[To Solution](#)

♠ 3 led

♠ A K
 ♥ K 9 5
 ♦ 6
 ♣ Q 10 9 6 5 4 2

♠ 9 6 5 4 2
 ♥ A Q 7
 ♦ A K 8 5
 ♣ J

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1 ♣	pass	1 ♠
pass	2 ♣	pass	3NT
all pass			

West leads the ♠ 3 against 3NT. How will you play?

Problem 24

[To Solution](#)

♦ A led

♠ A K J
 ♥ K Q
 ♦ J 9 8 4
 ♣ K Q 8 5

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♠
pass	2 ♣	pass	2 ♥
pass	3 ♠	pass	4 ♣
pass	4NT	pass	5NT*
pass	7 ♠	all pass	

How will you play 7 ♠ when West leads the ♦ A?

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♠
pass	3 ♠	pass	4NT
pass	5 ♥*	pass	6 ♠
all pass			

West leads the ♥Q against your spade slam. How will you play?

If the trumps break 2-2 or 3-1, there will be no problem. You have a heart loser in the South hand but you can discard a heart from dummy on the fourth round of diamonds and then ruff a heart.

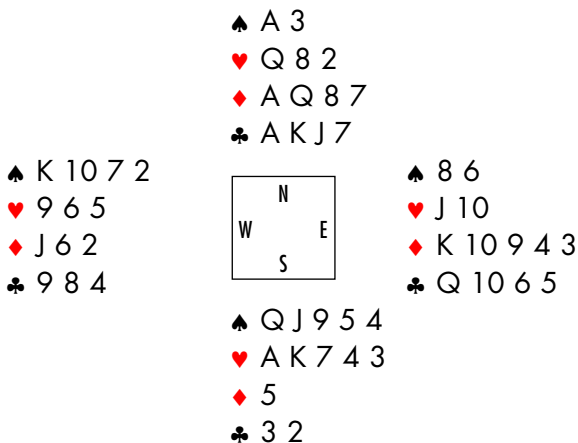
So, you must seek a plan that will deal with a 4-0 trump break on either side. Looking at the trump suit in isolation, you would normally play the king on the first round, which would allow you to pick up ♠Q-10-x-x on either side for only one loser. It would also preserve some chance of scoring all thirteen tricks. Such a play will not work in the context of this deal. West would split his honors on the second round of trumps. If you then tried to cash four diamonds, to prepare for a heart ruff, West would ruff and score two trump tricks. Nor would you be able to follow the alternative plan of ruffing two clubs in your hand.

To keep all your chances intact, you should win the first trick with the ♥K, cash the ♣A and lead a low trump towards dummy, covering West's card if he follows. If West plays low here, your covering card in

dummy will win. You can then draw two more rounds of trumps and play for a heart ruff. If instead West inserts the ♠10, you win with the ♠A, ruff a club with the ♠J and lead a low trump towards the ♠9. West wins with the ♠Q but cannot prevent you from ruffing a second club with the ♠K and drawing trumps.

If instead West shows out on the first trump, you will simply win with dummy's ♠A and pick up East's trumps with a double finesse.

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 22



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	2NT	pass	3♥*
pass	3♠	pass	5♥
pass	6♥	all pass	

South suggests a slam in one of the majors with a transfer sequence. Although North is somewhat overloaded with high cards in the minor suits, he raises to 6♥. How will you play when West leads the ♥5?

You need to set up the spades. If you draw all the trumps and then play ace and another spade, you will go down as the cards lie. You can improve your chances by drawing just two rounds of trumps before ruffing a spade, but it's not easy to time the play correctly. Suppose you win the trump lead with the ace. If you play ace and another spade now, West will return a third spade, promoting a trump trick for the defenders. If instead you play the ace and queen of trumps before playing ace and another spade, West will remove dummy's last trump when he wins with the ♠K. What can be done?

After winning the trump lead with the queen you must play a low spade from dummy! West wins the ♠Q with the ♠K and plays another

trump to your ace. Both defenders follow to the ♠A and you reach your hand by cashing the ♦A and ruffing a diamond. You can then ruff a spade with dummy's last trump. This line of play is safe if the spades were 3-3 all along and it gains when East has a doubleton spade but does not hold the last trump. You return to your hand with another diamond ruff, draw West's last trump and triumphantly (or modestly, according to your nature) claim twelve tricks.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1 ♣	pass	1 ♠
pass	2 ♣	pass	3NT
all pass			

West decides to lead a spade despite South's bid in the suit. In expert fashion he leads the ♠3 rather than the ♠Q, in case his partner holds with a singleton or doubleton nine, king or ace. You win with dummy's ace and must now look for the best way to develop the club suit. What is your choice?

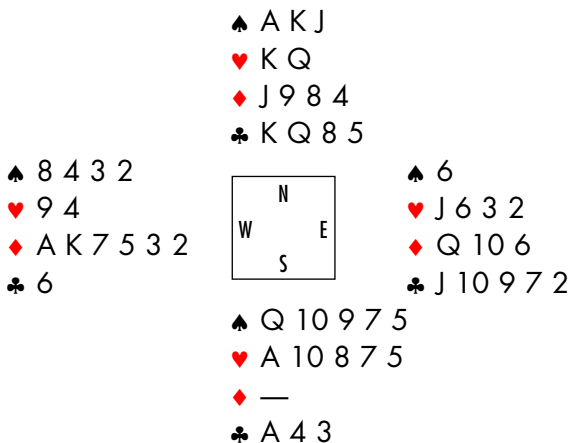
How about playing a low club to the jack? That's no good. When clubs break 3-2, the defenders will allow the ♣J to win. With only two further entries to the dummy, you will not be able to set up and enjoy the club suit.

Perhaps it is better to lead the ♣Q on the first round? When clubs break 3-2, a first-round duck by the defenders will be unproductive. The lead will remain in the dummy and you can continue with a second round of the suit.

Although leading the ♣Q is better than playing low to the ♣J, it is still not the best play. When clubs break 4-1, the defender's club intermediates will come into the reckoning and you will lose three club tricks.

The play that gives you the best chance is to cross to the South hand with a heart and lead the ♣J towards dummy. If West follows with a low club, you will overtake with the ♣Q and hope that clubs break 3-2. The ‘extra chance’ you give yourself is that West may hold a singleton club honor. When the cards lie as in the diagram, for example, West will win with the ♣A. You win his spade return in the dummy and continue with the ♣Q, driving out East’s ♣K. He has to return a red suit and the game is yours.

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 24



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♠
pass	2 ♣	pass	2 ♥
pass	3 ♠	pass	4 ♣
pass	4NT	pass	5NT*
pass	7 ♠	all pass	

In the system being played South's 5NT response to RKCB showed two aces and a useful void, which could only be in diamonds. How will you play 7♠ when West leads the ♦A?

Your general plan should be to establish the heart suit. You ruff the diamond lead and cross to the ♠A. Without playing any more trumps, you play the king and queen of hearts. Neither opponent ruffs, you are pleased to see, and the key moment of the deal has been reached. How should you return to your hand — with a club to the ace, or by overtaking the ♠J with the ♠Q?

When this deal was originally played, declarer returned to his hand with the ♠Q, East showing out. He then led another heart, on which West was quick to discard his singleton club. Declarer ruffed the heart

with dummy's singleton ♠K and returned to his hand with the ♣A. That was his plan, anyway, but West cruelly ruffed the ♣A and the grand slam was down one.

On deals like this you must use the potentially more dangerous entry first, before a defender has the chance to discard his holding in that suit. So, you should cross to the ♣A to ruff a heart with the ♠K. You can then overtake the ♠J with the ♠Q, draw trumps and (always an enjoyable moment) claim the contract.

Problem 25

[To Solution](#)

♠ J led

♠ 8 6
 ♥ 9 4 2
 ♦ 8 4
 ♣ Q J 6 5 3 2

♠ A K Q
 ♥ A K
 ♦ Q J 10 9 5
 ♣ K 8 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	3NT	all pass	2NT

West leads the ♠J against 3NT. How will you plan the play?

Problem 26

[To Solution](#)

♥ 9 led

♠ 7 5
 ♥ Q J 2
 ♦ 8 5 4
 ♣ 10 9 8 6 2

♠ A K
 ♥ A K 10 6 5 3
 ♦ A Q
 ♣ A K 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			2♣
pass	2♦	pass	2♥
pass	4♥	pass	6♥
all pass			

West leads the ♥9 against your 6♥. How will you play when trumps are (a) 2-2 and (b) 3-1? (Both defenders will follow low on the ♣A.)

Problem 27 [To Solution](#)

♥A led

♠ 5
 ♥ Q J 10 7 5 4
 ♦ K Q 7 5 2
 ♣ 6

♠ K Q J 10 8 7 3
 ♥ 6
 ♦ 9
 ♣ A K Q J

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♠
pass	2 ♥	pass	3 ♠
pass	4 ♠	all pass	

West leads the ♥A and plays a second heart to East's king. Can you see any risk to your contract? How will you overcome this risk?

Problem 28 [To Solution](#)

♦Q led

♠ A K
 ♥ K 7 4
 ♦ 8 2
 ♣ A Q 10 8 7 3

♠ J 8 7 4 3
 ♥ A Q 8
 ♦ A K 6
 ♣ K 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1NT
pass	6NT	all pass	

West leads the ♦Q. How will you play for maximum safety?

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	3NT	all pass	2NT

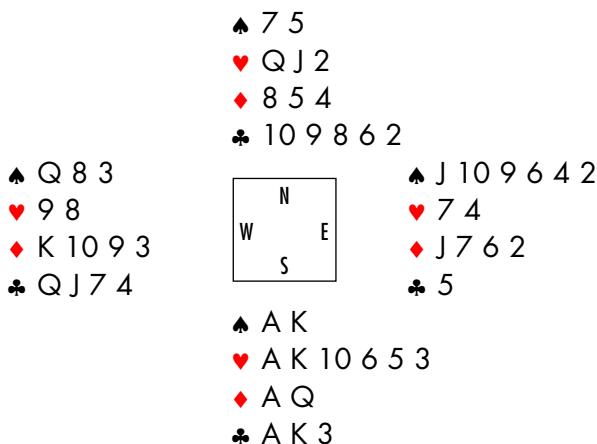
West spares you a deadly heart lead, placing the ♠J on the table. How will you play the contract?

If clubs are 2-2 or if one of the defenders has a singleton ♣A, you will be able to reach dummy's clubs. You will not be surprised to hear that the clubs do not lie so favorably on this occasion. What is the situation when one of the defenders holds ♣A-x-x? Once again, the sun is shining. You can play the king and queen of clubs, in either order, and the defender will not be able to take the ace without allowing you to score five club tricks. With two club tricks in the bag, you can switch to diamonds. Both major suits are still well guarded, so you will have time to drive out the ace and king of diamonds, again scoring an over-trick.

Now we come to the safety play that is required when clubs are 4-0. At Trick 2 you must lead specifically the king of clubs. Here West

will show out. If East takes his ace immediately, you will win his return and duck a round of clubs, setting up the suit. If instead East holds up the ace, you will turn to the diamond suit. Three spades, two hearts, three diamonds and one club will bring your total to nine tricks.

Suppose you carelessly begin with a club to the queen. East will take his ace and return a spade (or a heart). You will not be able to bring in the club suit, nor will you have time to develop the diamonds. Eight tricks will be your limit on the hand.



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			2♣
pass	2♦	pass	2♥
pass	4♥	pass	6♥
all pass			

West leads the ♥9 against your small slam. How will you play?

If clubs break 3-2 all will be easy. You can play ace, king and another club and then enter dummy with a third round of trumps. What if one of the defenders holds ♣Q-J-x-x?

The best play depends on how the trumps are breaking. After winning the trump lead in hand, you should cash the ♣A and your two top spades. You then cross to dummy with the ♥Q, pleased to see a 2-2 break. At this stage you have a 100% safety play. You lead the ♣10 from dummy. If East follows low, you run the card, knowing that clubs must be 3-2 if the finesse loses. (The clubs will be blocked, it's true, but West has no trump with which to remove the ♥J entry to dummy.)

When the cards lie in the diagram, East will show out on the second round of clubs. You rise with the ♣K and exit with a low club. West

wins with the queen or jack and is endplayed. A diamond return will be into your tenace and a club return will set up a long club in the dummy. The only other possibility, a spade return, will concede a ruff-and-sluff.

What if the trumps break 3-1? Your best chance then is to play clubs from the top, hoping for a 3-2 break.

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

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♠
pass	2 ♥	pass	3 ♠
pass	4 ♠	all pass	

Hoping that your partner would have bid more enthusiastically if he held two aces, you allow the bidding to die in 4♠. West leads the ♥A and an ace-less dummy appears, dispelling any fears of a missed slam. How will you play the spade game when West continues with a second heart to East's king?

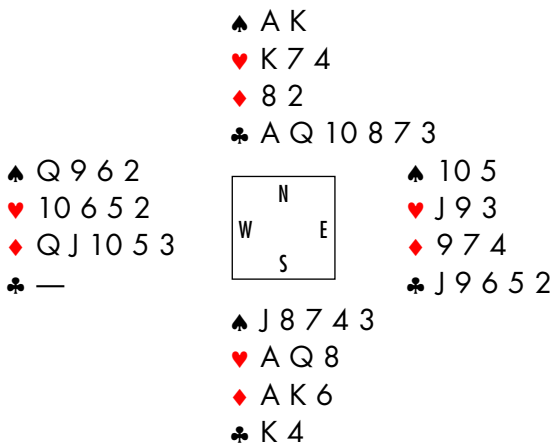
The original declarer went down. He ruffed the second spade and played the king of trumps. Since West wanted to know where his partner's entry was, he held up the ace of trumps for the first two rounds. East showed out on the second round of trumps, discarding a club to show no interest in that suit. West won the next trump with the ace and played a diamond to East's ace. A third round of hearts promoted the ♠9 and that was down one.

Did you spot the safety play to avoid such a trump promotion? It is no good discarding your ♦9 on the second round of hearts, of course,

since East could then play another heart. No, you must ruff the second heart and enter dummy by ruffing a club winner. You can then lead a good heart from dummy. Here East will follow suit on the third round of hearts, so you can discard your diamond loser. West will ruff but the contract is secure. You will lose just two trump tricks and one heart.

Suppose East had ruffed the third heart. What then? Overruffing is not a safe move. You might still suffer a trump promotion if East had ruffed with a singleton trump. Again you should throw your diamond loser.

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 28



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	6NT	all pass	1NT

North leaps straight to 6NT, trusting that there will not be two top diamond losers, and West leads the $\spadesuit Q$. How will you give your slam its best chance?

You have ten tricks on top and need only two further tricks to land the slam. The club suit offers you a 100% chance of achieving this aim, provided you can determine the right safety play. If clubs break 4-1, you can afford to lose a club trick and still make the slam. So, you must direct your attention to picking up the suit for one loser when either defender holds all five missing clubs.

How about cashing the king first? That's no good. East will then score two club tricks when he holds five clubs. Instead you should cross to dummy and lead the seven or eight of clubs. Your intention is to run the card, knowing that even if you lose to a singleton ♣9 the rest of the suit will be good. It does not help East to insert the ♣9 on the first round because you will then lose only one club trick (to the jack).

What will happen when West holds all five clubs? East will show out on the first round and you will win with the ♣K. You can then lead a second round of clubs towards dummy, covering West's card. You will have to concede one club trick to West but the slam will be yours.

Problem 29

[To Solution](#)

♠ A led

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

♠ 9 7 3 2
 ♥ K 8 5 4
 ♦ 9 5
 ♣ K 9 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	pass	1♥
dbl	3♠*	pass	4♥
all pass			

West leads the ♠A followed by a low spade. How will you play?

Problem 30

[To Solution](#)

♣K led

♠ 8 6
 ♥ 10 9 7 3
 ♦ 9 7 5 4 3
 ♣ 8 3

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			2♣
pass	2♦	pass	2♠
pass	2NT	pass	3♥
pass	4♥	pass	6♥
all pass			

You win and play the ♥A, West producing the ♥8. What now?

Problem 31 [To Solution](#)

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♣
pass	1 ♦	pass	2 ♠
pass	3 ♦	pass	3 ♥
pass	3 ♠	pass	6 ♠
all pass			

West leads the ♠10. What is the safest line of play?

Problem 32 [To Solution](#)

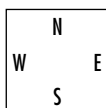
♠ J led
 ♠ A Q 7 5 4 2
 ♥ A J 8 3 2
 ♦ J
 ♣ A
 ♠ K 8 6
 ♥ 7
 ♦ Q 10 5 3
 ♣ Q 8 6 5 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1 ♣	2 ♣*	pass	2 ♠
pass	3 ♠	pass	4 ♠
all pass			

How will you play the spade game when West leads the ♠J?

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

	♠ 9 7 3 2
	♥ K 8 5 4
	♦ 9 5
	♣ K 9 6



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	pass	1♥
dbl	3♠*	pass	4♥
all pass			

North's 3♠ is a splinter bid, showing a sound raise to game in hearts and at most one card in the spade suit. You sign off in 4♥ and West leads the ♠A followed by a low spade. How will you play the contract?

It's an annoying defense. If West had switched to his singleton diamond, for example, you could have won with the ace and drawn trumps in three rounds. You could then have established the diamonds with a ruff and returned to dummy with a fourth round of trumps. Still, what can be done?

You ruff the second round of spades and draw one round of trumps with the ace. If you draw a second round of trumps next you will go down! Instead you should test the diamond suit by cashing the ace and king. If diamonds prove to be 3-2 you will revert to the trump suit, claiming a bundle of tricks when the trumps also prove to be 3-2.

When the cards lie as in the diagram, West can ruff the second round of diamonds. Since he is ruffing from the three-card trump holding, he cannot beat the contract. If West continues with a third round of spades, you can ruff with dummy's penultimate trump. You can then establish the diamonds by ruffing a third round of the suit with the king of trumps. Finally, you cross to dummy's last trump, drawing the defenders' last two trumps. The diamond winners will then give you the contract.

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 30



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			2♣
pass	2♦	pass	2♠
pass	2NT	pass	3♥
pass	4♥	pass	6♥
all pass			

West leads the ♣K against your small slam in hearts. You win with the ace and play the ace of trumps, West following with the ominous ♥8. How will you continue?

West's ♥8 may well be a singleton and you should unblock the ♥7 from dummy. This will pave the way for an eventual finesse of your ♥6, should this become necessary. You continue with the ♥K and West does indeed show out, throwing a club. Once again you unblock from dummy, following with the ♥9. Your next task is to establish the spades. You lead the ace and king of spades and both defenders follow. When you lead a third round of spades West produces the missing queen. What now?

Ruffing in dummy is a hopeless proposition. You know that East will overruff and the defenders will then cash a club. Instead you must throw dummy's last club, trading a dangerous spade ruff for a safe club

ruff. Let's suppose that West now finds the best defense of a diamond switch. You win with the ♦ A, leaving these cards still to be played:

♠ —
♥ —
♦ J 8 6
♣ Q J 9

♠ —
♥ 10 3
♦ 9 7 5 4
♣ —

N
 W E
 S

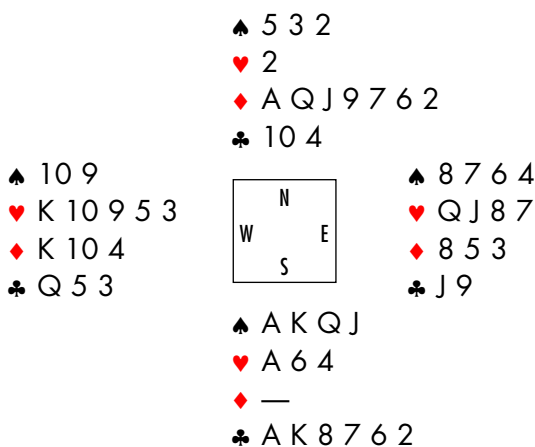
♠ 10 7 2
♥ Q 6
♦ —
♣ 10

♠ —
♥ J 5
♦ Q
♣ 7 4 2

Making a mental note to send the deal to the bridge writer in your local paper, you ruff your last club with dummy's ♥10. This is your third unblock in the trump suit! You then lead the ♥3 to your ♥6, draw East's last trump and claim the contract.

When the trumps broke badly there was a serious risk that the suit might become blocked. The deal illustrates two related techniques in avoiding such a blockage: you can follow with a higher trump than is necessary; you can also ruff with a higher trump than is necessary.

To Problem SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 31



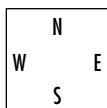
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♣
pass	1 ♦	pass	2 ♠
pass	3 ♦	pass	3 ♥
pass	3 ♠	pass	6 ♠
all pass			

Hoping to make large numbers of tricks from the black suits, you take a flyer into 6♠. What is the safest line of play after West has led the ♠10?

There are problems ahead if you try to ruff a club. Suppose you do this immediately. East will overruff and return a trump, removing dummy's last trump. Deprived of any heart ruffs and with no entry to the $\spadesuit A$, you will go down two. Suppose instead that you ruff a heart, cash the $\spadesuit A$, throwing your last heart, and then take a club ruff. East will refuse to overruff and you can reach your hand (to draw trumps) only by ruffing a diamond. You will lose control and go several down.

The winning play is simple, if you can spot it. Since you need the clubs to be 3-2 anyway, you should duck a club at Trick 2! Say that the defenders return a second trump. You will win, ruff a heart and discard a heart on the diamond ace. You can then reach your hand with a second round of clubs to draw the outstanding trumps.

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



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	2♣*	pass	2♠
pass	3♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

Your partner's Michaels Cuebid shows length in both majors and you reach game in spades. How will you play when West leads the ♠J?

It may seem natural to play for two heart ruffs in the South hand. If you follow this line, the 5-2 heart break will defeat you. West will overruff on the third round of hearts and you will be one trick short. A better idea is to play for just one heart ruff and set up a diamond trick to bring the total to ten.

You win the trump lead in the dummy and play the ♦J. If East covers with the king, you will be able to take a ruffing finesse against West's ace on the next round of diamonds. Let's assume that East does not cover and West wins the first round of diamonds with the ace. He returns a second round of trumps and East shows out. You win with your ♠K and run the diamond queen to East's king. East has no trump to play and will probably return a club to dummy's singleton ace. You return to your hand with a heart ruff and throw a heart on the established ♦10. You can then reach dummy with a minor-suit ruff and draw West's last trump. You score six trump tricks, one heart ruff and one high-card trick in each side suit.

Problem 33

To Solution

♠ —
♥ 8 3 2
♦ 9 7 4 2
♣ A K Q 10 3 2

♠ K led

♠ 10 8 4 2
♥ A 10 6
♦ A K Q 5
♣ J 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♠	3♣	3♠	1♦
pass	5♦	pass	pass
all pass			6♦

West leads the ♠K. How will you attempt to safeguard the slam?

Problem 34

To Solution

♠ A 8 4
♥ 7 5 4
♦ 9 8 4 2
♣ A K 2

♣ J led

♠ K 7 5 2
♥ A K Q J 2
♦ A 5
♣ Q 7

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	2♦	pass	1♥
pass	3♥	pass	2♠
pass	6♥	all pass	4♦

How will you tackle the slam when West leads the ♣J?

Problem 35

To Solution

♠2 led

♠ 8 7 3

♥ A 9 5

♦ K 10 5 3

♣ A 9 7

♠ A K 5

♥ K 7 3

♦ Q 7 4 2

♣ K Q 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

West leads a fourth-best ♠2 against 3NT. How will you play?

Problem 36

To Solution

♣4 led

♠ 7 5 4

♥ A 10 3

♦ Q 9 4

♣ A 9 7 2

♠ K Q J 10 9 6 3

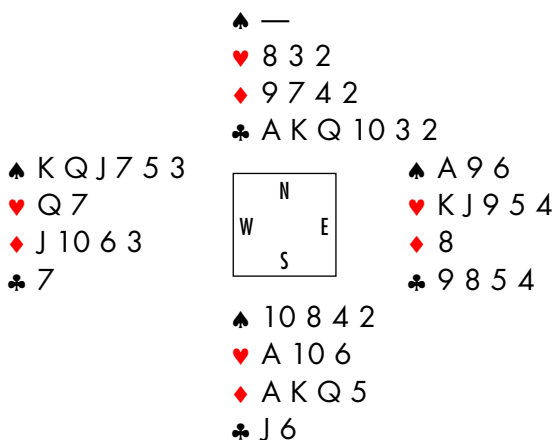
♥ —

♦ A J 10 2

♣ K J

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
4♥	pass	pass	4♠
pass	5♣	pass	5♦
pass	6♠	all pass	

West leads the ♣4 against 6♠. How will you play?



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♦
2♠	3♣	3♠	pass
pass	5♦	pass	6♦
all pass			

The East-West bidding makes it clear that dummy will be short in spades and you step boldly into the slam zone. West leads the ♠K and you see that you have ended in an excellent spot. How will you attempt to safeguard the slam?

Suppose you ruff and cash two rounds of trumps, revealing a loser in the suit. You will not make the contract. You can ruff another spade and return to hand to draw the penultimate trump, but West will interrupt the run of the clubs long before you have discarded your remaining losers.

Since you can afford to concede a trump trick to a 4-1 break, you should make the safety play of ducking a round of trumps at Trick 2, when it is safe to do so. You can then win the return, ruff another spade, and draw trumps. It remains only to run dummy's clubs, throwing your last two spades and the two heart losers. Twelve tricks!

A heart lead, impossible to find, would have defeated the slam. How would you have played the contract if West had led his singleton club?

The winning line of play after a club lead is double-dummy. You must win with the ♣J and ruff a spade immediately. Next you have to duck a round of trumps. Since you cannot afford to have East gain the lead (and deliver a club ruff), you must lead the nine of trumps! Only West can win this card and you are safe. Any sane declarer would no doubt prefer to hope that trumps were 3-2.

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♥
pass	2 ♦	pass	2 ♠
pass	3 ♥	pass	4 ♦
pass	6 ♥	all pass	

You don't like North's 6♥ bid? Better not say too much about it. He may not like the way you play 6♥! How will you tackle the slam when West leads the ♣J?

The main chance of making the contract is that the spades break 3-3. Can you spot an extra chance? How about ruffing the fourth round of spades in dummy? It may be possible if the defender with two spades began with only two trumps. You could then draw two rounds of trumps before taking the spade ruff and he would not be able to overruff. How should you arrange the play to take advantage of this extra chance?

Suppose you draw two rounds of trumps and then play ace, king and another spade, finding that the suit breaks 4-2. That's no good. The player who wins the third spade will either be able to draw dummy's last trump or give his partner a spade ruff.

To make the slam a delicate move is required. You should draw just one round of trumps and then duck the first round of spades. You were always going to lose one round of spades and it makes sense to do this

at a moment when the defenders cannot do any damage with their return (they cannot remove dummy's last trump, for example).

You win the return and draw a second round of trumps, that is, if the defenders did not return a trump and do the job for you. Your next move is to cash the ace and king of spades. When spades break 3-3, you will simply draw the last trump and claim the contract. When the cards lie as in the diagram, your 'extra chance' will pay off. East has only two spades but he has no chance to ruff or overruff because he does not hold the last trump. You ruff your fourth spade with dummy's last trump and return to your hand to draw the last trump. The diamond loser will go on the third round of clubs. (If the defenders played a diamond when you ducked a spade, you will need to cash the ♣A-K to discard a diamond. You can then return to hand with a diamond ruff.)

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

West leads a fourth-best ♠2 against 3NT. How will you play the contract?

You have seven tricks on top, so two tricks from the diamonds will bring your total to nine. What is the safety play to land two tricks from this diamond suit?

You should win the spade lead and lead a low diamond to dummy's king. If East takes the diamond ace and returns a spade, you might as well hold up until the third round of spades. You then cross to dummy with a club and lead a diamond towards your hand. You plan to finesse the ♦7 if East follows low or to rise with the queen (and later lead towards the 10) if East shows out. Either way, you will make the two diamond tricks that you need.

What if the ♦K wins on the first round? Again you will lead a second round of diamonds towards your hand, intending to cover any low

card or rise with the queen if East shows out. Playing in this fashion you will make at least two diamond tricks unless East started with an impregnable ♦A-J-9-8(-6).

This safety play is similar to the one where you need three tricks from A-J-x-x opposite K-9-x-x. Again you start by cashing the honor that is accompanied by the better middle card. As we saw in an earlier problem, you should play the ace and then lead towards the other hand, planning to finesse the nine unless the defender playing second to the trick shows out.

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 36

♠ 8 2
 ♥ K Q J 8 7 5 4 2
 ♦ 7 5
 ♣ 4

♠ 7 5 4
 ♥ A 10 3
 ♦ Q 9 4
 ♣ A 9 7 2

♠ A
 ♥ 9 6
 ♦ K 8 6 3
 ♣ Q 10 8 6 5 3

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

W N E S

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
4♥	pass	pass	4♠
pass	5♣	pass	5♦
pass	6♠	all pass	

West leads the ♣4 against your small slam. How will you play?

It is almost certain that the opening lead is a singleton. Suppose you win the first trick in your hand and play a trump. East will win and give his partner a club ruff. Instead you should win with dummy's ♣A and play the ♥A, discarding your remaining club. What now?

At some stage you will need to find East with the ♦K. Suppose you lead the ♦Q now, tempting East to cover. All will be well if East does cover with the ♦K, since you could then win and draw trumps. If East holds off the ♦K, though, you will go down. A second round of diamonds at this stage will allow East to deliver in a third-round diamond ruff when he takes the trump ace.

Suppose instead that you play trumps after just one round of diamonds, aiming to reach dummy eventually with the ♠7. You will then have to win the second round of diamonds in your hand, with the ♦A-J-10, and could no longer pick up East's ♦K.

You do best to rely on a 2-1 trump break, which is very likely when West has led a singleton in a side suit. After discarding your threatening second club honor on the ♥A, you play a trump which East wins with the singleton ace. You ruff his club return high and draw a second round of trumps. Finally you cross to dummy with the ♠7 and lead the nine of diamonds on the first round. When East plays low, you can continue with the ♦Q, underplaying with the ♦10. You score four diamond tricks and the slam is yours.

AFTERWORD

Did you find Safety Plays an entertaining topic? We won't be at all surprised if your answer is 'Not really, I found it quite hard work.' Bridge is a strange mixture of fun, hard work, delight and absolute misery. Yes, you're right, it's very similar to being married! Trying to give yourself an extra 5% chance whenever you can is hard work. The more you attempt to do it, though, the more you will find that the best moves become automatic. When you have already seen a particular situation in a bridge book or magazine, you don't have to invest so much effort when something similar arises at the table. This is certainly true with regard to safety plays within a single suit. In any case, if it were a simple matter to play top-class bridge, there would be little satisfaction in doing so.

What benefit did you expect to gain from tackling the problems in a book such as this one? If some of the safety-play techniques were new to you, there will be a direct benefit there. By applying them at the table, you will make more contracts than you did before. A more important advantage, perhaps, is that you will develop the approach of treating each contract at the table as if it were a problem in a book. 'West leads the ♦Q. How will you plan the play?' Say this to yourself next time you are playing in some tournament and you bid brilliantly to 6♣, West leading the ♦Q. Force yourself to spend a few moments planning the play of every single hand. More often than you may expect, you will reap a big reward from the extra effort.

THE 'TEST YOUR BRIDGE TECHNIQUE' SERIES

Elimination Plays
Planning in Suit Contracts
The Simple Squeeze
Entry Management
Planning in Notrump Contracts
Endplays and Coups
Defending Suit Contracts
Safety Plays
Avoidance Play
Reading the Cards
Defending Notrump Contracts
Deceptive Play

Master Point Press

416-781-0351

www.masterpointpress.com

Email: info@masterpointpress.com

TEST YOUR SAFETY PLAY!

This book is designed to accompany *Safety Plays*, Book 3 in the *Bridge Technique* series.

Why should you want to polish your safety play technique? There are two very good reasons. The first is that by applying them at the table, you will make more contracts than you did before. A more important advantage is that you will, perhaps, begin to approach each problem at the table as though it were a problem in a book. More often than you expect, you will reap a big reward for a little extra effort.

The basic principles of safety plays are straightforward, but applying them is not always so easy. Rest assured that some serious challenges await you in these pages!



DAVID BIRD has written more than fifty previous books, including the award-winning *Bridge Technique* series (with Marc Smith). A regular contributor to many bridge magazines, he lives near Southampton, England.



TIM BOURKE is a world-renowned collector of interesting bridge hands, whose previous books include *Countdown to Winning Bridge* (with Marc Smith) and *Saints & Sinners* (with David Bird). He lives in Canberra, Australia.

