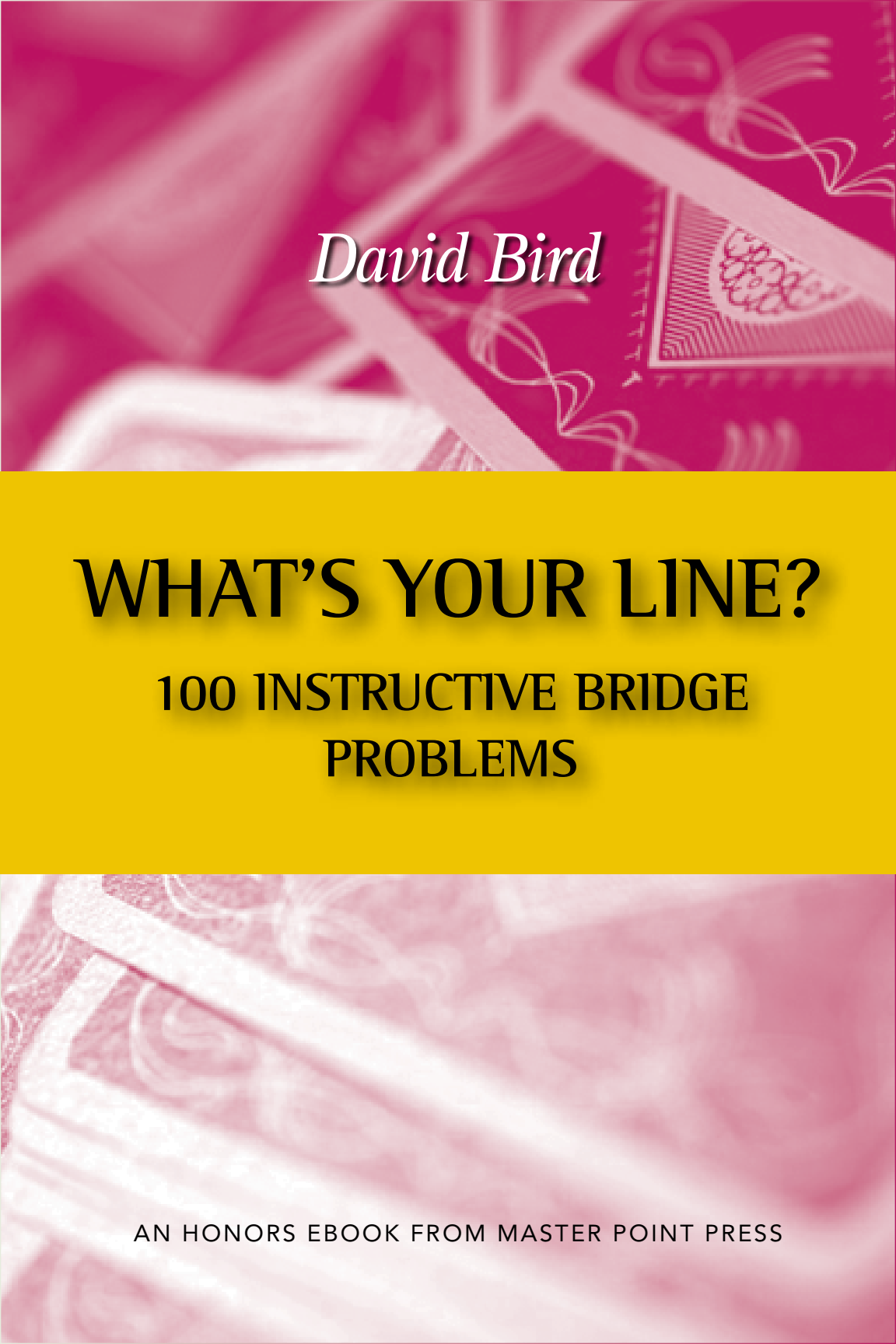




David Bird

WHAT'S YOUR LINE?

100 INSTRUCTIVE BRIDGE PROBLEMS

AN HONORS EBOOK FROM MASTER POINT PRESS

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M4S 1A6
(647)956-4933

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Introduction

The problems in some bridge books are ludicrously difficult. Even those who are supposed to be expert players find themselves shaking their heads and turning the page to read the answer. Rest assured that you will not find such taxing problems within these pages.

I expect you will solve quite a few problems on first viewing and maybe not spot the correct answer on others. Once you have read the solution, though, you will feel confident that you could deal with the situation if you met it at the table subsequently. In other words, the problems are instructive and intended to improve your game. Good luck and enjoy the book!

David Bird

This book is dedicated to my friend and fellow writer, Tim Bourke, the world's finest creator of bridge deals. Many thanks for all the elegant and fresh-looking compositions that have found their way onto my hard-drive over the years!

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Chapter 1

Entry problems

In this chapter we will look at a variety of problems with one feature in common. You have an apparent problem with entries. Usually this means that you cannot reach dummy as often as you would like.

When you plan a contract, a large part of your effort goes into making sure that you will not run into entry trouble. The following problems illustrate many of the techniques that you can use to conjure an extra entry.

PROBLEM 1

♠ A 9
♥ Q 7 6
♦ K J 10 9 6
♣ 9 8 4

♠K led

N	E
W	S

♠ 7 5 2
♥ A K J 9 2
♦ Q 8
♣ A 6 5

West	North	East	South
1 ♠	Pass	1NT	2 ♥
2 ♠	4 ♥	All pass	

West leads the ♠K and you win with dummy's ace. If trumps break 3-2, you could ruff a spade with the ♥Q (to avoid an overruff). This would still leave you with four losers – one spade, one diamond and two clubs. You would like to score some diamond tricks but the defenders can be expected to hold up the ♦A for one round. What can be done?

Point to remember

When planning the play, you must try to predict any obstacles that the defenders may place in your way. It is likely here that they will hold up the ♦A. Can you see one other problem that they may cause you?

SOLUTION 1

	♠ A 9										
	♥ Q 7 6										
	♦ K J 10 9 6										
	♣ 9 8 4										
♠ K Q J 10 6 4		♠ 8 3									
♥ 10 8 3		♥ 5 4									
♦ A 5		♦ 7 4 3 2									
♣ 10 7		♣ K Q J 3 2									
	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 7 5 2										
	♥ A K J 9 2										
	♦ Q 8										
	♣ A 6 5										

West bids his spades twice and leads the ♠K against your eventual contract of 4♥. You win with the ♠A and play the ace and king of trumps, pleased to see a 3-2 break. Should you draw the last trump now? No, because you would like to use the ♥Q as an entry to the diamonds, once the defenders have taken the ♦A.

With one trump still out, you lead the ♦Q. It is no surprise when West defends well by holding up the ♦A. You play a second round of diamonds and West (who has seen his partner's ♦7, the start of a count signal suggesting four cards) wins with the ♦A. He continues with the ♠Q, East following, and then the ♠J. How will you play from this point?

If you ruff the third round of spades with dummy's ♥Q, you will go down. With the side entry to dummy removed, you will have to play diamonds immediately, hoping to discard at least one of your clubs. Unlucky! West will ruff the third round of diamonds and the dummy will then be dead. You will lose one trick in each suit, going one down.

Instead you should discard a club from dummy on the third round of spades. All will then be well. If West switches to a club, you will win with the ♣A, cross to the ♥Q and discard two losers on the diamonds. If instead West plays a fourth round of spades, you will ruff in your hand, retaining the ♥Q as an entry on the next trick.

Point to remember

When you need to establish a suit in dummy, you will often have to make use of the entries provided by dummy's trump holding. Here you needed to preserve the ♥Q as an entry to reach the established cards in diamonds. In fact, you had to combine this with a second technique, declining to ruff the third round of spades because it would remove the trump entry that you needed.

PROBLEM 2

♥Q led

♠ 8 7 5
♥ K 5 3
♦ Q 10 9 7 2
♣ J 8

N
W E
S

♠ A K 6
♥ A 8 2
♦ A J 5 3
♣ A 6 5

West	North	East	South
Pass	3NT	All pass	2NT

West leads the ♥Q against 3NT. How will you play the contract?

Bidding tip

With 20 points and an otherwise empty 4-3-3-3 hand, it is perhaps tempting to keep the bidding low by opening 1♦ instead of 2NT. ‘I needed partner to find a response before game could be there,’ you can imagine some players saying. That’s true in a way. The problem may come when partner does respond to your opening bid. Will you then be able to express your hand? If the bidding starts 1♦ – 2♣, for example, it may be difficult to get across your full strength.

SOLUTION 2

♠ 8 7 5
♥ K 5 3
♦ Q 10 9 7 2
♣ J 8

♠ Q 3 2
♥ Q J 10 4
♦ K 8 6 4
♣ K 7

N

W

E

S

♠ A K 6
♥ A 8 2
♦ A J 5 3
♣ A 6 5

♠ J 10 9 4
♥ 9 7 6
♦ —
♣ Q 10 9 4 3 2

Your opening bid of 2NT is raised to 3NT and West leads the ♥Q. How will you play the contract?

Perhaps your response is: ‘I’ve never seen an easier bridge problem. How on earth could anyone go down?’ In that case you are a better player than the original declarer! When dummy went down, he noted that he would have a chance of five diamond tricks if East held the ♦K. He won the first trick with the ♥K and led the ♦Q. The contract could no longer be made against best defense!

East showed out on the first round of diamonds and West allowed the ♦Q to win. Declarer continued with a low diamond to his ♦J, but again this card was allowed to win. Declarer could make only three diamond tricks, to go with his five top winners in the other suits. He could not avoid going one down.

Since only four diamond tricks are needed for the contract, you should win the opening lead with the ♥A in your hand. You can then play ace and another diamond, clearing the suit. It will not help West to duck twice in diamonds, winning the fourth round, because the ♥K will be an entry to dummy.

Point to remember

If you were playing duplicate pairs (match-points), where an overtrick is heavily rewarded, you would be justified in winning the first trick with the ♥K, to finesse in diamonds. You would score 10 tricks when East held the ♦K and fewer than four cards. When he held ♦K-8-6-4, you would still score nine tricks. Only when West held all four diamonds would the contract actually go down.

PROBLEM 3

♥K led

♠ A 9 2

♥ 9 6 4

♦ J 9 8 7 5 2

♣ 7

N

W E

S

♠ K Q J 6 4

♥ A 7 2

♦ A K

♣ A J 5

West	North	East	South
			2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
Pass	6♠	All pass	

You reach an adventurous small slam in spades and West leads the ♥K. How can you make twelve tricks?

Bidding tip

With only eight likely tricks in his hand, South was pushing it a bit to open 2♣ and rebid 2♠. With 5-3-3-2 shape, a good alternative would be to rebid 2NT instead. Because you often have to open 2NT (or 2♣, rebidding 2NT) with a five-card major, many pairs use 5-card Stayman opposite. In other words, 3♣ asks for a 5-card major. You respond 3♦ when you hold no 5-card major but do hold at least one 4-card major. There is then space for a 4-4 fit to be found. (For details, look up ‘Puppet Stayman’ on your internet search engine.)

SOLUTION 3

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

West leads the ♥K against 6♠. How can you make twelve tricks?

It is no good ruffing two clubs in dummy. That would leave you with two heart losers. To make the slam you must set up dummy's diamonds. After winning the heart lead with the ace, you cash the ace and king of diamonds. If the sun is shining and the ♦Q falls doubleton you will draw trumps in three rounds, ending in the dummy, and claim all thirteen tricks.

When the cards lie as in the diagram, both defenders follow to the top diamonds but the ♦Q does not fall. You now need two entries to the dummy - one to ruff the diamonds good and another to reach the established long cards in the suit. The ace of trumps will provide one entry. What is the best chance of a second?

After drawing one round of trumps with the ♠K, you should lead the ♠4 and finesse dummy's ♠9 when West produces the ♠8. (This is a better chance than rising with the ace, hoping that East started with ♠10-x. When West holds three trumps, as you now require, he has a 60% chance of holding the ♠10.) The finesse succeeds and you ruff a diamond with the ♠Q. You then cross to dummy's ♠A and play the remaining diamonds. Away go three of your four losers and you make the small slam.

Point to remember

You often have to guess which defender holds a key card. On this deal you needed to guess which defender held the ♠10. In the absence of any information from the bidding, the player who began with more cards in the suit will be favorite to hold the missing card. Here you needed to assume that West had started with three spades (because there could not be two entries to the dummy if East held ♠10-x-x). It was therefore right to play West for the ♠10.

PROBLEM 4

♥K led

♠ J 10 5
♥ 9 5
♦ K 6 3 2
♣ 8 5 3 2

N
W E
S

♠ Q 8
♥ A 10 2
♦ A Q J 4
♣ A Q J 6

West	North	East	South
Pass	3NT	All pass	2NT

West leads the ♥K against your contract of 3NT, East following with the ♥3. How will you play the contract?

Bidding tip

It's fair enough to raise 2NT to 3NT on the basis that the combined point-count will be between 24 and 26. Such raises often end in disappointment, though. A combined count of 24 points may give you a good play for 3NT when they are divided 12-12 between the hands. That's because you can move freely back and forwards, with entries to both hands. When all the points are concentrated in declarer's hand, you may suffer from the lack of entries to the dummy. Suppose you held just a king in the North hand. It is probably wiser to pass rather than worry that you might have up to 25 points between you.

SOLUTION 4

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

West leads the ♥K against 3NT. You have six top tricks and will need three more tricks from the club suit. You are not afraid of any switch and might as well hold up the ♥A until the third round. What next?

Suppose you lead the ♦4 to dummy's ♦K and take one club finesse. Since you have no further entry to dummy, you will have to play the ♣A next and hope that East started with only a doubleton king in the suit. That's asking for rather a lot. How can you do better?

You must manipulate the diamond suit to give you a second entry to dummy. You begin by cashing the ♦A and ♦Q, confirming that the suit breaks 3-2. You can then afford to overtake the ♦J with the ♦K. A finesse of the ♣Q succeeds and you re-enter dummy by overtaking the ♦4 with the ♦6. When you repeat the club finesse West follows suit. That's good news! You play the ♣A, dropping East's ♣K, and now have nine tricks.

What would happen if the diamonds broke 4-1? You could not then overtake the jack on the third round without allowing the defenders to win the fourth round. You would have to use only one entry to dummy and hope that East had started with a doubleton ♣K.

Point to remember

There are various clever overtaking maneuvers possible to create extra entries. Suppose dummy has ♦A-K-9-2 and you have ♦Q-J-6-4. If you would like three entries to dummy, you cash the ♦Q and lead the ♦J. When West follows suit, it is safe to overtake with dummy's ♦K. If the suit breaks 3-2, dummy's ♦K-9 will give you two further entries. If instead East shows out, you will be able to finesse the ♦9 on the third round to create a third entry.

PROBLEM 5

♠ 8 4
♥ 7 5 4 2
♦ 8 7 4
♣ A 6 4 3

♦2 led

N
W E
S

♠ K Q 6 2
♥ A K
♦ A K 5
♣ K 8 7 5

West	North	East	South
		1♣	Dble
Pass	1♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	All pass	

East-West are playing a 5-card major system, so the opening bid of 1♣ may be based on a suit of fewer than 4 cards. How will you play 3NT when West leads the ♦2 and East plays the ♦J?

Bidding tip

An immediate overcall of 1NT by South would suggest around 15-18 points. If instead he doubles and rebids 1NT, this shows about 19-20 points. Here South follows his double with a jump to 2NT, which indicates around 21-22 points and allows North to raise to game with his ♣A.

SOLUTION 5

♠ 8 4
 ♥ 7 5 4 2
 ♦ 8 7 4
 ♣ A 6 4 3

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

♠ A J 9 3
 ♥ Q 10 3
 ♦ Q J 9
 ♣ Q 10 2

♠ K Q 6 2
 ♥ A K
 ♦ A K 5
 ♣ K 8 7 5

N
 W E
 S

West leads the $\heartsuit 2$ against 3NT, East playing the $\heartsuit J$. The opening lead suggests that the diamonds are breaking 4-3. You have six tricks on top and must aim to add two spades and one extra club to bring your total to nine.

You win the diamond lead and cash the ♣K. All now depends on your next move in the club suit. To make two spade tricks you will need to lead twice towards your ♠K-Q. This will require two entries to dummy in the club suit. How can you play the clubs to best advantage?

You will have to hope for a 3-2 club break. Also, you will need to unblock the ♣8 and ♣7 to promote dummy's ♣6 into a fourth-round entry. You lead the ♣8 to dummy's ♣A, pleased to see both defenders follow suit. A spade to the king wins the next trick and you then lead the ♣7 from your hand, retaining the precious ♣5.

East wins the third round of clubs and clears the diamond suit. You cross to dummy by leading the ♣5 to the ♣6 and lead a second round of spades. The contract is secure. East is welcome to rise with the ♠A and return a diamond. The defenders will score just one spade, two diamonds and a club, leaving you to claim your game.

Point to remember

Unblocking spot-cards is often a profitable business. Suppose dummy has $\spadesuit$ K-6-5-2 opposite $\spadesuit$ A-J-8-4 in your hand. If you need two diamond entries to dummy, you can play the $\heartsuit$ 8 to dummy's $\heartsuit$ K, finesse the $\heartsuit$ J and cash the $\heartsuit$ A (all following). You can then lead the $\heartsuit$ 4 to the $\heartsuit$ 6 to reach dummy again.

PROBLEM 6

♠ A Q
♥ 8 5 3 2
♦ A J 8 6 4 2
♣ 6

♣Q led

N
W E
S

♠ K 5 2
♥ A Q J 10 6
♦ 7
♣ A K 5 3

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

West leads the ♣Q against 6♥. Even if you lose a trump trick, you can still bring your total to twelve by ruffing two clubs in dummy. You win with the ♣A, ruff a club and play a trump from dummy. How will you continue when East shows out on this trick?

SOLUTION 6

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

West leads the ♣Q against 6♥. Two club ruffs will give you the slam even if you lose a trump trick. You ruff a club at Trick 2 and then play a trump. How will you continue when East shows out?

The original declarer rose with the ♥A and took the second club ruff that he needed. He then led dummy's last trump to the queen and king. When West exited with a spade, declarer won with the ♠A and cashed the ♠Q.

Needing to reach his hand to draw West's remaining trumps, he then played ace and another diamond, ruffing with the ♥6. Not the best! West overruffed with the ♥7 and the slam was defeated. Declarer would do no better to ruff high, of course, since this would promote West's ♥9-7.

Do you see the mistake that declarer made? He should not have allowed West to lock him in the dummy. Before playing a second round of trumps, declarer must have cashed dummy's ♠A-Q and the ♦A. When West subsequently wins with the trump king, it makes no difference which suit he chooses to return. Declarer will be able to win (or ruff) in the South hand and draw trumps.

Point to remember

This technique was prettily named by Terence Reese as the Dentist's Coup. You wonder why? It was because of the element of extraction when declarer removed those cards from dummy that could be used to lock him in the wrong hand.

You can see how well it works. By playing the ♠A-Q, declarer ensures that he can win a spade exit with his ♠K. As a result of playing the ♦A, he can ruff a diamond exit in his hand.

PROBLEM 7

♠ K Q

♥ 9 3

♦ 9 6 5 3 2

♣ J 7 6 3

♠ J led

N

W E

S

♠ 6 5

♥ A K 2

♦ A Q J 10

♣ A Q 10 5

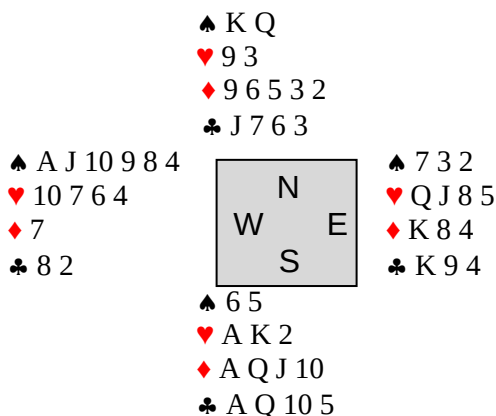
West	North	East	South
Pass	3NT	All pass	2NT

West leads the ♠J against 3NT and dummy’s ♠Q wins the trick. Presumably West has led from a suit headed by the A-J-10. With the defenders poised to take at least four spade tricks, you will need to pick up nine tricks without losing the lead. How will you play the contract?

Bidding tip

As it happens, game in a minor suit would have been a better prospect than 3NT. You would still have a good chance of 11 tricks, even if West held one of the minor suit kings. Looking for a minor-suit fit was scarcely a promising idea on that North hand, with 5 of his points in spades. In the long run it is best to head for the 9-trick no-trump game.

SOLUTION 7



How would you play 3NT when West leads the ♠J and dummy's ♠Q wins the trick? Playing diamonds first is not a promising line. Even if you find East with ♦K-x (or single ♦K) you will score only four diamond tricks; there will be no quick entry to dummy to reach the fifth card in the suit. With only eight tricks at your disposal, you would have to play the ♣A from your hand, hoping that the ♣K was singleton.

Let's see what happened at the table. At Trick 2 declarer led the ♣J. This is better than a low card because if the jack is run successfully you will remain in dummy for a second club finesse. All would have been easy if East had covered with the ♣K, as many defenders would. After winning with the ace, declarer would score further tricks with the ♣Q and ♣10. He could then overtake the ♣5 with dummy's ♣7 to take a successful diamond finesse.

East was a wily character and could guess that declarer held ♣A-Q-10-x rather than ♣A-Q-x-x (otherwise he would have led low from dummy, playing East for ♣K-x). East therefore played low on the ♣J. Declarer countered by underplaying with the ♣10. A low club to the queen came next and, once again, declarer could reach dummy on the fourth round of clubs for a diamond finesse. Great defense, great dummy play!

(If East holds four clubs to the king, you cannot return to dummy in clubs and will need the ♦K to fall singleton.)

Point to remember

You can often improve your prospects by unblocking cards from your hand. Suppose you are in 3NT and a weak dummy contains $\spadesuit$ Q-9-4-2 opposite $\spadesuit$ A-J-10-8. You lead dummy's $\spadesuit$ Q and unblock the $\spadesuit$ 10 from your hand. You can then lead the $\spadesuit$ 9, playing the $\spadesuit$ 8 from your hand, remaining in dummy for a third finesse if necessary. In this way you pick up $\spadesuit$ K-7-6-3 with East.

PROBLEM 8

♠ A 6 5
♥ J 7
♦ A K 7 3
♣ A J 10 9

♦ J led

N
W E
S

♠ K Q J 10 4 2
♥ A 8 6 5 3
♦ 4
♣ Q

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♥
Pass	6♠	All pass	

How will you play the spade slam when West leads the ♦J?

Bidding tip

North is too strong to bid 4♠ (or 3NT) on the second round and he bides his time with a bid in the fourth suit. (In the USA, but not when playing Acol, a continuation of 3♠ would have been forcing.)

South rebids his hearts and cue-bids the ♥A when partner gives preference to spades. North can tell that his minor-suit controls will cover South’s cards there and leaps to 6♠.

SOLUTION 8

	♠ A 6 5										
	♥ J 7										
	♦ A K 7 3										
	♣ A J 10 9										
♠ 3		♠ 9 8 7									
♥ Q 10 4 2		♥ K 9									
♦ J 10		♦ Q 9 8 6 5 2									
♣ K 8 6 5 3 2		♣ 7 4									
	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ K Q J 10 4 2										
	♥ A 8 6 5 3										
	♦ 4										
	♣ Q										

How would you play 6♠ when West leads the ♦J?

If you can give up a club trick, you will have five winners in the minor suits, to go with six trumps and the ♥A. You need to plan the play so that the defenders cannot thwart you when the suit breaks are inconvenient.

Suppose you win the diamond lead and play the ace and jack of clubs, throwing a heart. West will win and play a third club, East ruffing. You can overruff but one of your discards for the heart losers will be lost and the slam will fail.

Suppose instead that you play a club to the queen at Trick 2. West can hold up the king. You continue with a low heart (or ace and another heart) but when you ruff a heart with dummy's ♠A East will discard his last club. You will never make a trick with the ♣A!

Only one line is good enough. You play dummy's second high diamond at Trick 2, throwing the ♣Q. This clears the way for you to run the ♣J. If West ducks now, you are in dummy to cash the club ace and can later ruff a heart high.

Point to remember

This deal is an example of how difficult it can be to discover the right way to play a contract. You need to foresee how the defenders might defeat you, if the cards lie in a particular way.

PROBLEM 9

♠ Q J 10 6 5
♥ 8 7 4 2
♦ 5
♣ Q 6 3

♦7 led

N
W E
S

♠ A K
♥ A K Q J 6
♦ 8 2
♣ A 9 5 2

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♦	3♦	2♣
5♦	5♥	All pass	3♥

Although South does not hold ‘game in hand’, he decides that it would be too dangerous to open with a mere one-bid. He takes the plunge with 2♣, intending to rebid a game-forcing 2♥.

West, who is non-vulnerable against vulnerable, makes an advance sacrifice in diamonds and this pushes the opponents to the five-level.

How would you play 5♥ when West leads the ♦7, won with East’s ♦10, and East continues with the ♦A?

Bidding tip

There is very little chance of an opening bid of 1♥ being passed out on the deal above. Many South players would have opened just 1♥ and there is nothing much wrong with that. Even when someone or other does keep the bidding open, you may then have difficulty in getting the strength of your hand across. It is a close decision which of the opening bids will work best in the long run.

SOLUTION 9

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

The opponents bid to the five-level in diamonds and you are pushed to a contract of 5♥. How should you tackle the play when West leads the ♦7 to East's ♦10 and the ♦A is returned?

Suppose you ruff in the dummy and play two rounds of trumps. The 3-1 break will prevent you from unblocking the spades and crossing to dummy's last trump to enjoy the remaining spade winners. You will have to draw a third round of trumps, unblock the two top spades and lead a club towards the queen, hoping to gain an entry in that way. East holds the ♣K, so you will go down, losing one diamond and two clubs. What else could you have tried?

You should refuse to ruff the second round of diamonds, preserving dummy's trump length. Whatever East returns at Trick 3, you will win in the South hand and draw trumps in three rounds. You can then unblock the top spades and cross to dummy's ♥8 on the fourth round of trumps. You make five hearts, five spades and the ♣A. Easy, once you have seen it!

More difficult, perhaps, was East's excellent defense of a second round of diamonds. It was the only way to give declarer a chance to go wrong. He could tell from the bidding that South would hold all the missing high cards.

Point to remember

When you are hoping to enjoy several tricks from dummy's long side suit, you often need to reach them by 'drawing trumps, ending in the dummy'. This may merely mean that you cannot afford to draw trumps straight away. You must establish the side suit first and only then cross to dummy's last trump. On this deal, the critical play was to decline to ruff in the dummy, to preserve the trump entry to the blocked spades.

PROBLEM 10

♥3 led

♠ 8 7 3
♥ 8 5 4 2
♦ K J
♣ J 10 7 5

N
W E
S

♠ A K Q J 6 2
♥ A 9 6
♦ A 10
♣ A K

West	North	East	South
Pass	3♣	2♥	Dble
Pass	6♠	Pass	5♠
		All pass	

It is fair to warn you that the final problem in each set of ten is a bit more challenging than the preceding nine. (Good luck with it!)

East opened a weak 2♥ and South was faced with quite a problem in describing his massive hand. He began with a take-out double, learning little from his partner's minimum response in clubs. He then suggested a slam by jumping to 5♠. Some would say that this asks for a heart control. North did not ascribe such a limited meaning to the bid. In any case, it was unlikely that South had two top heart losers and was also missing the ♦K. He raised to 6♠ and West led the ♥3, an obvious singleton. How would you play the slam? (When you play the ace and king of trumps, you will find that West began with three trumps.)

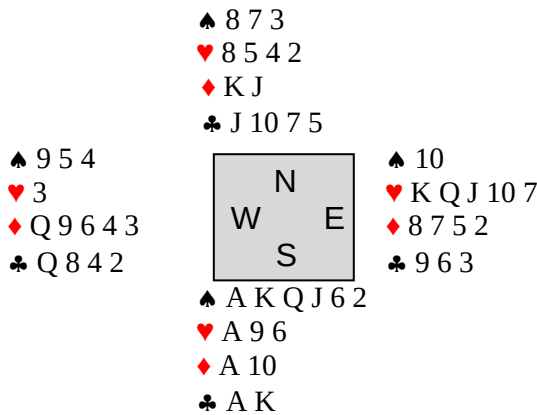
Bidding tip

When partner doubles a weak two-bid, some players (but not North on this deal) use a conventional Lebensohl response of 2NT to show a weak hand in the 0-7 point range. The doubler is expected to rebid 3♣ unless he is especially strong. This allows the responder to pass if clubs is his best suit, otherwise to sign off in some other suit.

If instead the responder bids a suit at the three-level (rather than 2NT), this suggests about 8-10 points.

When the opening bid is 2♥ and the doubler's partner holds spades, he can bid 2♠ (weak), 2NT and then 3♠ over 3♣ (stronger), or leap directly to 3♠ (forcing).

SOLUTION 10



East opens with a weak 2♥ on his chunky 5-card suit and you find your way to a final contract of 6♠. How will you play this when West leads the ♥3?

You win with the ♥A and play two rounds of trumps. All would have been easy after a 2-2 break. You could have cashed the ♣A-K, crossed to the ♦K and run the ♣J into the safe (West) hand, discarding a heart loser. Dummy's last trump would remain as an entry to the established ♣10, on which you would throw the remaining heart loser.

Unfortunately, East shows out on the second trump. What then? You should not give up. You draw West's last trump, cash the ♣A-K and lead the ♦10 to dummy's ♦J. When this finesse succeeds, you lead the ♣J and throw... not a heart, but the ♦A!

West wins with the ♣Q and then has to revive the two minor-suit winners in dummy. To gasps of amazement from the other three players, you discard your two losing hearts and claim the slam.

Point to remember

Look back at the club position. It is a common technique to lead one loser (the ♣J on the third round) and discard another loser (here a heart) from your hand. Nothing is gained directly on that trick because you are simply swapping one loser for another. The gain comes when you discard another loser on the established ♣10.

Chapter 2

The 3NT Battleground

The most frequently played game contract is 3NT. Perhaps you think that there is not much to it. With no trump suit to worry about, it is just a question of holding up aces and finessing into the safe hand. Oh yes?

It may be fairly easy to acquire the basic skills of playing in no-trumps but you could spend a lifetime gradually improving your technique in this area. To see how far you’ve already travelled along this road, test your skill on the following problems.

PROBLEM 11

♠ 8 5 3
♥ 8 2
♦ A K 7 6 2
♣ 9 7 4

♣Q led

N
W E
S

♠ A K 7
♥ A J 6 3
♦ Q 5 3
♣ A K 8

West	North	East	South
Pass	3NT	All pass	2NT

How will you tackle 3NT when West leads the ♣Q?

Point to remember

The first step in planning a no-trump contract is to count your immediately available top tricks.

SOLUTION 11

♠ 8 5 3
♥ 8 2
♦ A K 7 6 2
♣ 9 7 4

♠ J 6
♥ Q 10 4
♦ J 10 8 4
♣ Q J 10 5

♠ A K 7
♥ A J 6 3
♦ Q 5 3
♣ A K 8

♠ Q 10 9 4 2
♥ K 9 7 5
♦ 9
♣ 6 3 2

N

W

S

E

West leads the ♣Q against 3NT. What plan do you make?

Let's see first how the original declarer went down. He won the club lead, cashed the ♦Q and led a second round of diamonds. West helped declarer to follow the wrong path by following with the ♦J on the second round. Declarer won with dummy's ♦A and was not overjoyed to see East show out. With only three diamond tricks now available, declarer needed to conjure a second trick from the heart suit. Perhaps East would hold the king and queen of the suit. He played a heart to the jack and West's queen, after which there was no way to make the contract. How should he have done better?

If you take the trouble to make a plan, you will see that you start with eight top tricks. Once both defenders follow to the ♦Q, you are guaranteed to make an extra trick from the diamond suit even if it breaks 4-1. You lead a second round of diamonds and duck in the dummy (yes, even if West tries to fool you by playing the jack!)

You win the defender's return and cross to the ♦A, scoring the ♦K and ♦7 for the contract. If diamonds were 3-2, this play would cost you an overtrick. Yes, but this is true of many safety plays. You are willing to pay a small premium to insure that you collect the (much larger) game bonus.

Point to remember

No doubt declarer would have spotted the winning play if it had been West who showed out on the second round of diamonds. The moment you stop to plan this contract, you will say to yourself, 'Everything will be easy if diamonds are 3-2. What can I do if they break 4-1?' It then becomes clear that you should duck a round of diamonds early in the play.

PROBLEM 12

♠ A 9 6 2
♥ A K
♦ A K 8 7 5 2
♣ Q

♣J led

N
W E
S

♠ Q J 4
♥ Q J 10 9 6
♦ 4 3
♣ A 6 4

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	All pass	

West leads the ♣J, covered by the ♣Q and East’s ♣K. Not the best of starts!
What plan will you make?

Bidding tip

North’s jump-shift rebid of 2♠ shows a very powerful hand. It is game-forcing, even though South may hold a weak hand of 6 points (occasionally 4 or 5 points). Inexperienced players tend to make such jump-shift rebids too often, just because they hold 17 or 18 points and are worried that partner will pass a simple rebid in a new suit. Partner will rarely pass a change of suit. When he does, and you hold only a moderate 17 or 18 points, you are unlikely to have missed a game.

SOLUTION 12

	♠ A 9 6 2										
	♥ A K										
	♦ A K 8 7 5 2										
	♣ Q										
♠ 10 8 5		♠ K 7 3									
♥ 8 7 3 2		♥ 5 4									
♦ 10		♦ Q J 9 6									
♣ J 10 9 8 5		♣ K 7 3 2									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ Q J 4										
	♥ Q J 10 9 6										
	♦ 4 3										
	♣ A 6 4										

It's not often that 3NT is in trouble with a combined count of 30 points. How would you play 3NT when West leads the ♣J, covered by the ♣Q and ♣K? It would be poor play to win with the ♣A immediately. When you established the diamond suit (or unblocked the hearts and led a spade to set up an entry to your hand), the defenders would beat you by scoring four club tricks.

Suppose your hearts were a less promising ♥10-8-6-5-2 instead. You would have to hold up the ♣A for two rounds and then attempt to set up the diamonds without allowing West on lead. You might then make the contract when clubs were 6-3.

With your present heart holding a much better line is available. You duck the first two rounds of clubs, throwing the ♥K from dummy. If the defenders persist with a third round of clubs, you will discard dummy's ♥A as well. The way will then be clear for you to cash the heart winners in your hand. It will not help the defense to switch to some different suit because you can then unblock dummy's hearts and set up a spade entry to your hand while the club ace is still intact.

Point to remember

Look out for this type of play when the potentially blocking card lies in your hand instead of the dummy. Suppose that the dummy holds ♣A-K-6-5-3-2 opposite your ♣10-8-7. You may be granted a 2-2 club break, yes, but the last spot-card in your hand will block the suit. By holding up dummy's ace in the suit that they have led, you may be able to discard one of the club spot-cards in your hand. The clubs will then run when the opponents' cards divide 2-2.

PROBLEM 13

♠ A 8 5

♥ 10 4 2

♦ J 9 8

♣ Q 4 3 2

♠Q led

N

W E

S

♠ K 7 3 2

♥ A K 8

♦ A K Q 2

♣ J 7

West	North	East	South
Pass	3NT	All pass	2NT

West leads the ♠Q against 3NT. What is your plan to make the contract?

Point to remember

Sometimes there are two possible chances of making the contract and it is not possible to combine them. You must then calculate which chance will give you the greater prospect of success.

SOLUTION 13

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

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

The deal arose in the National Open Teams in Canberra. One declarer ducked the first spade, won the second spade with the ace and played four rounds of diamonds. He then cashed the ♠K, hoping for a 3-3 spade break. That was not very likely after West had chosen to lead the suit! When East showed out on the third round of spades, he exited with a spade and soon drifted one down.

This was a moderate effort from a well-known international player. He seemed not to realise that this club holding offers almost a 50% chance of the extra trick that declarer needs. Whenever the same defender holds both club honors, you can set up a trick by leading towards the jack and then towards the queen. Here you win the first spade with the ace (a duck risks a heart switch) and lead a club from dummy. As the cards lie, East has to go in with an honor to prevent your jack from scoring. You win his return and play the ♣J, setting up dummy's ♣Q as your ninth trick. What could be easier?

Suppose that the cards lay differently and the ♣J had lost to an honor in the West hand, spades being continued. Unless spades unexpectedly divided 3-3, you would lead towards the ♣Q in the hope that West began with both the top club honors.

Point to remember

Some players have a blind spot when they need to find a favorable lie in a suit to score the extra trick that they need. Suppose you hold ♠Q-6-3 in your hand opposite ♠9-7-4 in the dummy. If there is no other chance, you should lead twice towards the ♠Q. You will then make the contract when East holds the ♠A and ♠K.

PROBLEM 14

♥10 led

♠ A 9 2

♥ A 7 5

♦ K J 8 7 3

♣ 4 2

W

N

E

S

♠ K Q 4

♥ Q J 6

♦ 10 9 2

♣ A Q J 3

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

North-South were playing a weak 1NT of 12-14 points. South’s 2NT rebid therefore showed 15-17 points. West leads the ♥10 against 3NT. What is your plan to make the contract?

Bidding tip

On an auction of this type, the 2NT rebid should show the opposite point-count to a 1NT opening. If you normally play a 15-17 point 1NT, a 2NT rebid here would suggest 12-14 points.

Suppose instead that North had bid 1♠ and you had jumped to 2NT. This would then show 18-19 points, whatever no-trump range you played.

SOLUTION 14

	♠ A 9 2										
	♥ A 7 5										
	♦ K J 8 7 3										
	♣ 4 2										
♠ J 6		♠ 10 8 7 5 3									
♥ K 10 9 8 2		♥ 4 3									
♦ A 6 5		♦ Q 4									
♣ K 7 5		♣ 10 9 8 6									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ K Q 4										
	♥ Q J 6										
	♦ 10 9 2										
	♣ A Q J 3										

West, who overcalled 1♥ over your 1♣ opening, leads the ♥10 against 3NT. How will you play the contract?

We will see first how the original declarer went down. He won the heart lead with the ♥J and ran the ♦10. East won with the ♦Q and returned a heart, allowing West to clear the suit. When declarer played on diamonds again, West won with the ♦A and scored two more heart tricks to put the game one down.

How should the deal be played? You should allow West's ♥10 to win the first trick! Suppose he continues with another heart, which you win in your hand. You run the ♦10, as before, but see the difference. East now has no heart to return. When he switches to the ♣10, you rise with the ♣A and clear the diamond suit. Nine tricks are yours.

Point to remember

Suppose you had been dealt ♥K-6-4 instead of ♥Q-J-6. It would have been much easier to see the merits of a hold-up at Trick 1. With two potential diamond stoppers to knock out, you would want to exhaust East's heart holding. Holding the ♥Q-J opposite the ♥A is a similar situation and the winning play is the same in both cases.

PROBLEM 15

	♠ 7 4 3											
	♥ A 9 6											
	♦ 9 7 4 2											
	♣ Q 4 2											
♣6 led	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S			
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ A K 5											
	♥ K 4 3											
	♦ K Q 8 5											
	♣ K 10 7											
West	North	East	South									
Pass	2♦	Pass	1♦									
All pass			3NT									

A 2NT rebid would have been enough on South’s rather empty hand with only four diamonds. He decided to bid 3NT, however, and West led the ♣6, East playing the ♣8. Suppose you had been South. How would you have played the contract?

Bidding tip

A single raise can be made on quite a modest hand. Although South held 18 points, his shape was a barren 3-3-4-3 and he would need 7 or 8 points opposite to offer good play for game. On that basis, a game try of 2NT was an adequate reflection of his values. If partner held 7 or 8 points, he would raise to 3NT.

If instead South held 5 or 6 diamonds, he would be entitled to rebid more aggressively.

SOLUTION 15

♠ 7 4 3
♥ A 9 6
♦ 9 7 4 2
♣ Q 4 2

♠ Q 8 2
♥ Q 7 5
♦ J 3
♣ A J 9 6 3

♠ J 10 9 6
♥ J 10 8 2
♦ A 10 6
♣ 8 5

♠ A K 5
♥ K 4 3
♦ K Q 8 5
♣ K 10 7

Diagram illustrating a bridge hand layout. The cards are distributed among four players (North, South, East, West) and a central dummy box. The dummy box contains the North-South hand. The cards are as follows:

- North (top): ♠ 7 4 3, ♥ A 9 6, ♦ 9 7 4 2, ♣ Q 4 2
- South (bottom): ♠ A K 5, ♥ K 4 3, ♦ K Q 8 5, ♣ K 10 7
- West (left): ♠ Q 8 2, ♥ Q 7 5, ♦ J 3, ♣ A J 9 6 3
- East (right): ♠ J 10 9 6, ♥ J 10 8 2, ♦ A 10 6, ♣ 8 5

West leads the ♣6 against 3NT, East playing the ♣8. If you make two club tricks, this will give you a total of six tricks outside the diamond suit. You will therefore need three diamond tricks to make the game. East will have to hold the ♦A. If East has three diamonds, you will have to lead diamonds twice from the dummy. How can you enter dummy twice for this purpose?

There is only one answer. You must win the first trick with the ♣K rather than the ♣10. You cross to the ♥A and lead a diamond to the king. All goes well when this card wins. You then lead a club, to set up dummy's ♣Q as a second entry to dummy. There is nothing West can do. If he plays low, you will win the trick with dummy's queen and play another diamond, setting up nine tricks.

The only other defense West can try is to rise with the ♣A and play another heart. Fortunately for you, hearts break 4-3, so the defenders cannot set up enough tricks to beat you. It was an unlucky opening lead from West. If he leads any other suit, even a diamond, the contract goes down!

Point to remember

Look back at the club suit on this deal and suppose that you win the first trick with the ♣10. West can then stop you from reaching dummy a second time with the ♣Q. If you lead the ♣K at any stage, he will duck. If instead you lead the ♣7, he will rise with the ♣A and your ♣K will have to win the third round.

PROBLEM 16

♥J led

♠ J 6

♥ A 7 3

♦ A K 6 3 2

♣ 8 6 4

N

W E

S

♠ A K 7

♥ Q 5 4

♦ 8 5 4

♣ A K 7 2

West	North	East	South
Pass	3NT	All pass	1NT

West leads the ♥J against your contract of 3NT. You play low from dummy and East wins with the ♥K, returning the ♥8. You have eight tricks, including two in hearts, so you must look for the best chance of creating an extra trick from one of the minor suits.

What is your plan?

SOLUTION 16

♠ J 6
 ♥ A 7 3
 ♦ A K 6 3 2
 ♣ 8 6 4

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

♠ Q 8 5 4
 ♥ K 8 2
 ♦ J
 ♣ Q 10 9 5 3

♠ A K 7
 ♥ Q 5 4
 ♦ 8 5 4
 ♣ A K 7 2

N
 W E
 S

West leads the ♥J against 3NT, East winning with the ♥K and returning the ♥8. A 3-2 diamond break is a better chance than a 3-3 club break. You win the heart return with the ♥Q and duck a round of diamonds, East winning with the ♦J. East returns the ♥2, won with dummy's ♥A. How will you continue?

With the hearts breaking 4-3, the original declarer saw that he could combine his chances in the two minor suits. First he tested the lie of the diamonds, cashing the ♦A. No luck came from that source, East discarding a club on the second round. Declarer then switched his attention to clubs, ducking a round of that suit. The clubs did not break 3-3 and the contract went one down.

Did you like declarer's line of play? Your correct answer is 'No!' When declarer won the third round of hearts with the ♥A, he should simply have ducked another diamond. This play was guaranteed to give him an extra trick from the diamond suit, even if the suit divided 4-1.

Point to remember

Declarer was pleased to have noticed that he could combine two chances (in diamonds and clubs) on this deal. This piece of mental agility distracted him, causing the blind-spot that he could guarantee the contract simply by ducking another diamond. It's amazing how often this sort of thing happens at the bridge table. You fear a defensive ruff and the defender follows suit. A big relief, yes, but you must still keep your concentration as you plan your continuation.

PROBLEM 17

♥K led

♠ Q J 3 2

♥ 10 5 3

♦ K 9

♣ A K 6 2

N

W E

S

♠ A K 5

♥ A 8 7 6

♦ 8 3 2

♣ Q 7 4

West	North	East	South
2♥	3♥	Pass	1NT
All pass			3NT

How will you play 3NT when West leads the ♥K and East discards a diamond? You have eight top tricks and a 3-3 club break would deliver an easy ninth trick. With the deal appearing in a quiz book, it is just possible that the clubs will not break favorably...

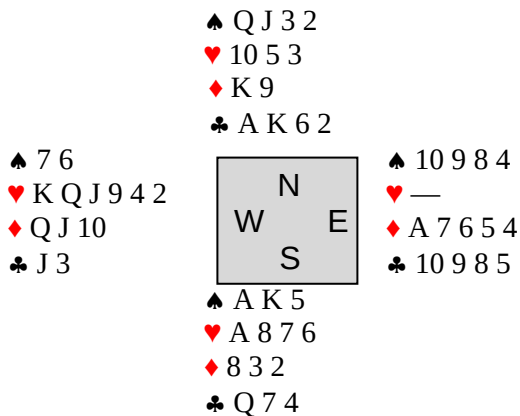
Bidding tip

North's 3♥ was part of the Lebensohl convention. North would bid 2NT (requesting 3♣ from South) on most hands where he wanted to compete to three of a suit but not invite game. There are four strong Lebensohl sequences:

2NT, then 3NT	Heart stopper.
2NT, then 3♥	Heart stopper and four spades
3♥	No heart stopper and four spades
3NT	No heart stopper

Several variations are possible and you should agree with your partner how these four sequences are allocated.

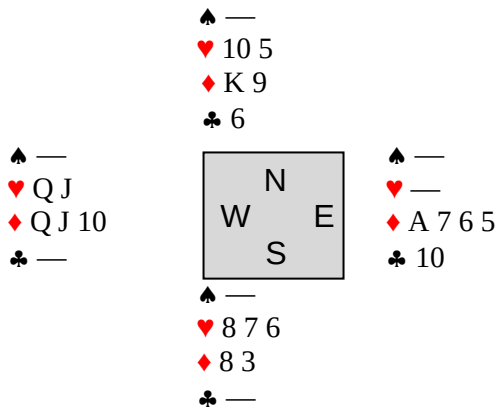
SOLUTION 17



How will you play 3NT when West (who overcalled 2♥) leads the ♥K and East shows out, throwing a diamond?

You should win the first round of hearts and continue with four rounds of spades. If West has been dealt four clubs, in addition to the ♦A and his good heart suit, he will have had to throw two heart winners to retain his club guard. You can then set up the ♦K as a ninth trick.

As the cards lie, West comes under no pressure and is able to throw two clubs. When you play the ♣A, West shows out, discarding a heart. There will be no play for the contract if West holds the ♦A with his good hearts. You continue with the queen and king of clubs, leaving this position:



You now exit with dummy's ♣6. When East wins, he is forced to concede a trick to dummy's ♦K and the game is yours.

PROBLEM 18

♠ 7 5

♥ K J 6 2

♦ 8 7 4 3

♣ 9 7 2

♠Q led

N

W E

S

♠ A K 6 2

♥ Q 7

♦ A K Q

♣ A K 6 3

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

How will you play 3NT when West leads the ♠Q, East playing the ♠4?

Bidding tip

What sort of hand do you think South’s bidding sequence shows here? It should indicate a balanced hand of 25-27 points. If instead South held a long minor suit that gave him a good chance of running nine tricks in no-trumps, he should rebid three of his suit before bidding 3NT. It is important that responder knows the type of the opener’s hand so that he can evaluate any slam prospects.

SOLUTION 18

	♠ 7 5										
	♥ K J 6 2										
	♦ 8 7 4 3										
	♣ 9 7 2										
♠ Q J 10 9 3		♠ 8 4									
♥ 8 5 4		♥ A 10 9 3									
♦ J 2		♦ 10 9 6 5									
♣ J 8 4		♣ Q 10 5									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K 6 2										
	♥ Q 7										
	♦ A K Q										
	♣ A K 6 3										

How will you play 3NT when West leads the ♠Q?

You have seven top tricks. By knocking out the ♥A, you can bump your total to eight. How can you give yourself the best chance of an extra trick (your ninth) from one of the minors?

You win the spade lead and cash the three top diamonds. If the diamonds broke 3-3, you would lead the ♥Q and overtake with the ♥K. Whether or not East took the ♥A on this trick, you would be able to reach dummy in hearts and could then score your fourth diamond trick. If instead you made the mistake of leading the ♥Q and playing low from dummy, East would duck and you will never reach the table.

When the diamonds are not 3-3, you need to find a 3-3 club break. You lead the ♥Q, which the defenders have to duck (to prevent you from making two heart tricks). Next you play ace, king and another club. If the suit breaks 3-3, the long card in clubs will give you a ninth trick. Suppose you cleared the clubs before playing the ♥Q. You would then go down when West held the ♥A alongside his spade winners. The defenders would take three spades, a heart and a club, before you could score a heart as your ninth trick.

Point to remember

Look again at what happens when diamonds fail to break 3-3 and you are forced to fall back on a 3-3 club break. In that case you need to make one extra trick in both hearts and clubs, when you have only one spade stopper left. Leading the ♥Q first allows you to do this. The defenders cannot afford to win, since that would give you two heart tricks instead of a heart and a club. Once you have pocketed your heart trick, you set up another trick in clubs. A clever maneuver!

PROBLEM 19

♠ 10 6 4
♥ A Q 10 6 2
♦ A 5 3
♣ 5 2

♠ 5 led

N
W E
S

♠ K J 9
♥ K 8
♦ K 8 6 4
♣ A K 6 3

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3NT	All pass	

You open a 15-17 points 1NT and choose to play in 3NT when partner shows five hearts and then offers you a choice of games. How will you play this contract when West leads the ♠5?

Bidding tip

When partner shows a 5-card major and then asks you to choose between game in that suit and 3NT, you should nearly always play in the major when you have 3-card support. You see players passing 3NT on 3-3-4-3 shape. It may turn out all right but it is possible that partner's shape is 3-5-4-1, for example. He cannot continue with three of a minor unless he has the playing strength to support an 11-trick game when partner has good support for the minor.

SOLUTION 19

	♠ 10 6 4										
	♥ A Q 10 6 2										
	♦ A 5 3										
	♣ 5 2										
♠ A Q 8 5 3		♠ 7 2									
♥ 9 4		♥ J 7 5 3									
♦ J 7 2		♦ Q 10 9									
♣ 9 7 4		♣ Q J 10 8									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ K J 9										
	♥ K 8										
	♦ K 8 6 4										
	♣ A K 6 3										

How will you play 3NT when West leads the ♠5?

You will have a total of eight tricks, including one from the spades. The best chance of a ninth lies in the heart suit. You must aim to establish a fourth heart trick without letting East win the lead (since a spade return would then threaten the contract).

Suppose you win the spade lead in your hand and play king and another heart. As the cards lie, East will win the fourth round of hearts with the jack and you will go down on a spade return.

What you need to do is to finesse the ♥8 into the safe (West) hand. You cannot afford to use the ♦A as an entry for this heart finesse because a losing heart finesse to West will leave the hearts blocked; the ♦A will be needed to gain access to dummy's heart winners.

Let's go back to Trick 1. West's ♠5 lead tells you (by the Rule of 11) that East holds only one spade higher than the 5. If this is the ♠7 or ♠8, dummy's ♠10 will win the first trick. You rise with dummy's ♠10 at Trick 1, winning the trick, and play low to the ♥8, losing to West's ♥9. After this smart avoidance play, ducking a trick to the safe hand, nothing can stop you from scoring one spade, four hearts and two A-K combinations for the contract.

Point to remember

Suppose you win the opening lead with the ♠9 or ♠J and only then stop to make a plan. You see the avoidance play in hearts (finessing the ♥8) and wonder how to get to dummy. Too late! The deal is another example of why you should stop to make a plan before playing the first card from dummy.

PROBLEM 20

	♠ 6 3														
	♥ 5 4														
	♦ 9 7 6 4 3														
	♣ A K Q 5														
♠ J led	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S						
	N														
W		E													
	S														
	♠ K Q 4														
	♥ A K Q 7 2														
	♦ A 5														
	♣ 8 6 4														
<table><tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr><tr><td>1 ♠</td><td>Dble</td><td>Pass</td><td>1 ♥</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>3NT</td><td>All pass</td><td>2NT</td></tr></table>				West	North	East	South	1 ♠	Dble	Pass	1 ♥	Pass	3NT	All pass	2NT
West	North	East	South												
1 ♠	Dble	Pass	1 ♥												
Pass	3NT	All pass	2NT												

North’s double was for take-out and South’s 2NT rebid meant that he would have jumped to 2NT facing a normal one-level response — in other words, he held 18-19 points. How would you play 3NT when West leads the ♠J, East following with the ♠2?

Bidding tip

Suppose instead that West had overcalled at the two-level, North again making a negative double. Your 2NT rebid would then show less – the same as it would in an uninterrupted sequence of 1♥ – 2♣ – 2NT. So, if you normally play the 12-14 1NT opening, the rebid would show 15+. If instead you play a strong 1NT, the rebid would show 12-14. When you are not in the right range for 2NT, you look for a different rebid.

SOLUTION 20

♠ 6 3
♥ 5 4
♦ 9 7 6 4 3
♣ A K Q 5

♠ A J 10 9 7
♥ J 8
♦ K Q 8 2
♣ 9 3

♠ 8 5 2
♥ 10 9 6 3
♦ J 10
♣ J 10 7 2

♠ K Q 4
♥ A K Q 7 2
♦ A 5
♣ 8 6 4

West, who overcalled 1♠, leads the ♠J against 3NT. How will you play?

You win the first trick with the ♠Q and see that you then have eight tricks on top. How can you find a ninth trick without allowing the defenders to cash too many spade tricks? One simple possibility is to play the top hearts, followed by the top clubs. You would make the game when either suit broke 3-3 but go down on the actual lie of the cards.

You can counter a 4-2 heart break, setting up a long card in that suit, provided you duck a heart trick into the safe hand (West, who cannot continue spades effectively). You cross to dummy with a club and lead a low heart. When the deal first arose, a somnolent East followed with the ♥3 and declarer covered gratefully with the ♥7. West could do no damage from his side of the table and the game was easily made.

Suppose that East plays the ♥9 on the first round. You win with the ace and cross to club to lead another heart towards your hand. Even if West unblocked the ♥J on the first round, there is nothing that East can do now. If he puts up the ♥10 declarer will win with the king, dropping West's bare ♥8, and score all five heart tricks! So, East will have to play low and, once again, you can cover with the ♥7 to duck a heart trick into the safe hand.

Point to remember

Ducking into the safe hand is a form of ‘avoidance play’. What does that mean? It is a fancy name for preventing the danger hand from gaining the lead. You can use it in suit contracts too. Suppose you hold $\spadesuit$ K-7-4 in your hand and $\spadesuit$ 8-6-2 in the dummy and don’t want your right-hand-opponent to win the lead and play a diamond through your king. You might then aim to duck a trump trick to the safe defender on your left.

Chapter 3

Surviving a bad trump break

Many clever plays become necessary when you encounter a bad break in the trump suit. Some of them have to be made before you even know that the trumps are divided in hostile fashion.

In this chapter you can test yourself on a variety of such deals.

PROBLEM 21

♥10 led

♠ J 6 3

♥ 6 4 2

♦ 10 5

♣ A Q J 4 3

W

N

E

S

♠ A 7 4

♥ A K Q J 3

♦ K

♣ K 8 7 2

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

How will you play the heart game when West leads the ♥10 and East surprises you by discarding a diamond?

Four trump tricks, five clubs and the ♠A would bring your total to the required ten. Do you foresee any problems? How will you play the deal?

Bidding tip
Even if you play a 4-card major system, 2♥ is a better response than 1NT on those North cards.

SOLUTION 21

♠ J 6 3
♥ 6 4 2
♦ 10 5
♣ A Q J 4 3

♠ K 10 8
♥ 10 9 8 7 5
♦ A 9 4 3
♣ 10

♠ A 7 4
♥ A K Q J 3
♦ K
♣ K 8 7 2

♠ Q 9 5 2
♥ —
♦ Q J 8 7 6 2
♣ 9 6 5

N
W E
S

You reach game in hearts and West leads the ♥10, East enjoying the moment as he discards a diamond. What is your plan for the contract?

You will have to concede a trump trick at some stage. You cannot simply play four trumps and run the clubs because a competent West will delay his ruff until the fourth round of clubs. You will then have no way to reach the last club for a spade discard.

The best idea is to allow the opening trump lead to win! If West plays any suit except diamonds next, you will simply draw trumps in four more rounds and run the club suit.

What will you do if West is inspired and switches to the ♦A, followed by another diamond? If you ruff with one of your trump honors, this will promote a second trump trick for West. You should therefore discard a spade (or a club) instead. It is the end of the road for the defense. If West plays a third round of diamonds, you will be able to ruff in the dummy, preserving the trumps in your hand. After any other move by West you will draw trumps and claim the contract.

A trump lead seemed like a good idea to West at the time. Had he led a club, the ♦A or a spade, he would have beaten the contract.

Point to remember

When the defenders are conducting a ‘forcing defense’ (in other words, trying to make you ruff in the long trump hand), you can sometimes survive by discarding until you are able to ruff in the dummy instead.

PROBLEM 22

♠ A K 8 6 2

♥ A K J 4

♦ A J

♣ 8 6

♣K led

N

W E

S

♠ Q J 5 3

♥ Q 8 3

♦ 9 3 2

♣ 9 7 3

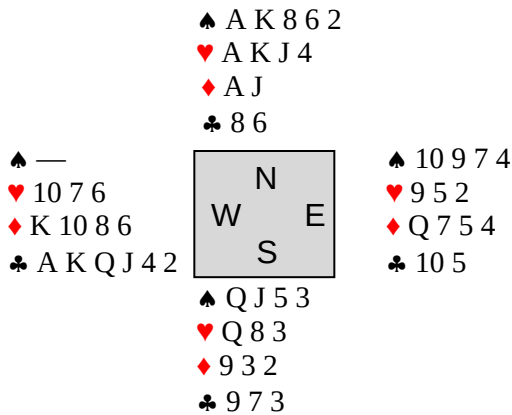
West	North	East	South
1 ♣	Dble	Pass	1 ♠
2 ♣	4 ♠	All pass	

West leads the ♣K against your spade game. East-West play that the lead of a king requests a count signal. East follows with the ♣10, showing an even number of clubs. West continues with the ♣A, East playing the ♣5, and then the ♣Q. How will you play the contract?

Point to remember

Looking at the losers from the long-trump (North) hand, you can see only one loser in diamonds and two in clubs. In such a circumstance, you must ask yourself: ‘What can possibly go wrong?’

SOLUTION 22



West, who bid clubs twice, leads the king, ace and queen of the suit. Meanwhile, East plays the ♣10 followed by the ♣5. How do you read the lie of the club suit?

West opened 1♣ and rebid 2♣. He will therefore hold at least five clubs. If East's high-low count signal is to be believed, West must hold six clubs to East's two. If you ruff the third round of clubs with a low trump and East overruffs, a subsequent diamond loser will put you one down. What can you do to avoid this outcome?

Suppose you decide to ruff with the ♠K, to prevent an overruff. Most of the time, this play would succeed. It would fail if trumps break 4-0, however. When the cards lie as in the diagram, ruffing high will promote a trump trick for East and there will still be a diamond loser to come.

Instead of ruffing the third round of clubs, you should discard dummy's ♦J. A further round of clubs would pose no problem because you could ruff in your hand, overruffing East if necessary. If instead West switches to a red suit, you will win and draw trumps. The dummy will then be high.

It would be particularly annoying to go down by ruffing high if East in fact held three clubs and had only pretended to hold a doubleton. By tricking you into ruffing high, he would promote a trick for his ♠10-9-7-4 and defeat the game.

Point to remember

The technique of discarding a diamond here, swapping a dangerous club ruff for a safer diamond ruff, is known as 'trading ruffs'. Look out for it when you fear an overruff.

PROBLEM 23

♠ A Q J 4 2
♥ A 2
♦ 8 6 2
♣ K Q 10

♣A led

N
W E
S

♠ 9 6
♥ K Q 9 8 6 4
♦ K J
♣ 9 6 5

West	North	East	South
			2♥
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♥	All pass	

South opens with a weak two-bid and North responds with a 2NT enquiry, asking for further information. South’s 3♠ response shows a maximum weak-two, including two of the three top trump honors.

West leads the ♣A against the heart game and switches to the ♦7, East winning with the ace. Back comes a club, won in the dummy and declarer plays the ♥A, not enjoying the moment when East discards a club. How would you continue the play, hoping to survive against this horrific 5-0 trump break?

Bidding tip

There are various methods of responding to a 2NT enquiry facing a weak two-bid. The Ogust set of responses are easy to remember:

- 3♣ – lower range, without 2 of the 3 top honors.
- 3♦ – lower range, with 2 of the 3 top honors.
- 3♥ – upper range, without 2 of the 3 top honors.
- 3♠ – upper range, with 2 of the 3 top honors.
- 3NT – a suit headed by the A-K-Q.

SOLUTION 23

	♠ A Q J 4 2										
	♥ A 2										
	♦ 8 6 2										
	♣ K Q 10										
♠ K 10 3		♠ 8 7 5									
♥ J 10 7 5 3		♥ —									
♦ 7 4 3		♦ A Q 10 9 5									
♣ A 8		♣ J 7 4 3 2									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 9 6										
	♥ K Q 9 8 6 4										
	♦ K J										
	♣ 9 6 5										

West leads the ♣A against South's heart game. When dummy appears, with its chunky club holding, West switches to the ♦7. East wins with the ace and returns a club, won in the dummy. When you play the ♥A, East discards a club. How can you recover the situation?

You must try to lose only one trump trick. You cross to the ♦K and finesse the ♠Q successfully. You then ruff dummy's last diamond with the ♥6 and finesse the ♠J. West still has the ♠K, so you can cash the ♠A and discard your last club.

The remaining cards in your hand are the ♥K-Q-9-8 and West sits over you with ♥J-10-7-6. Is he still looking happy? He shouldn't be! You lead a fourth round of spades from dummy and ruff with the ♥8. West overruffs and then has to lead back into your ♥K-Q-9. You lose only one trump trick and claim the game.

Point to remember

To achieve the trump end-play on West, you needed to read the shape of his hand. He made this rather easy for you when he followed with a low spade on the second round. Suppose he had put up the (doomed) ♠K instead. If you thought he held only two spades, you might have tried to cash a third round of clubs instead of a third spade.

West was more likely to lead the ♣A from a doubleton than from a tripleton, it is true. Still, it would have made you think for a moment!

PROBLEM 24

♠ 10 9 5 3 2
♥ Q J 9 6 5
♦ A K
♣ 7

♣K led

N
W E
S

♠ A K Q J
♥ A K
♦ J 8 2
♣ Q 9 5 2

West	North	East	South
			2NT
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♠
All pass			

North’s 3♥ transfer response shows at least five spades. His 5♥ continuation shows a major two-suiter and is a general slam try. This is pretty amazing when you are looking at six top honors in partner’s suits! Anyway, you decide that you can rely on partner for sufficient minor-suit controls and bid a small slam in spades.

West leads the ♣K (presumably from the ♣A-K) and switches to the ♦9, won in the dummy. How will you plan the play when West discards a club on the first round of trumps?

Bidding tip

It is hard to bid the North hand scientifically. A rebid of just 4♥ would be very cautious; a rebid of 6♥ would be over the top. If you remember the story of the Three Bears, you may think that North’s choice of 5♥ is ‘just right’!

SOLUTION 24

	♠ 10 9 5 3 2										
	♥ Q J 9 6 5										
	♦ A K										
	♣ 7										
♠ —		♠ 8 7 6 4									
♥ 10 8 7 4 3		♥ 2									
♦ 9 6		♦ Q 10 7 5 4 3									
♣ A K J 10 6 3		♣ 8 4									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K Q J										
	♥ A K										
	♦ J 8 2										
	♣ Q 9 5 2										

West leads the ♣K against 6♠ and switches to a diamond. When you play a trump to your hand, West discards a club. How will you proceed?

If you look at the losers in the long-trump (North) hand, it may seem that there are no further losers. Anyone coming to that conclusion will draw trumps in four rounds, unblock the ace and king of hearts and... oh dear! The hearts break 5-1 and that is one down.

When a contract appears to be solid, look for any bad break that might defeat you. How can you overcome a 5-1 heart break? You should consider matters from the South hand instead. You have one diamond loser there and four club losers, one already conceded. You should plan to ruff two clubs and throw a diamond and a club on the third and fourth round of hearts.

After one round of trumps, West showing out, ruff a club with the ♠10. Return to a trump and ruff a club with the ♠9. Draw the remaining trumps and unblock the ♥A-K. You can then cross to a diamond and throw your last two minor-suit losers on the ♥Q-J. Easy!

Point to remember

A common situation in suit contracts is that you start with a certain number of side-suit winners and there is no prospect of increasing that number. You then calculate how many trump tricks you will need. So, if you are in a small slam and have six side-suit winners (as on the deal above), you will need six trump tricks to make the contract.

It was not practical here to take one ruff in the South hand (giving you 5+1 trump tricks). You therefore had to take two ruffs in the North hand (giving you 4+2 trump tricks).

PROBLEM 25

♥K led

♠ 10 4

♥ 3

♦ A K 9 5 2

♣ A J 5 3 2

W

N

E

S

♠ A K Q 7 6 2

♥ A 8 5 2

♦ 7 4

♣ 6

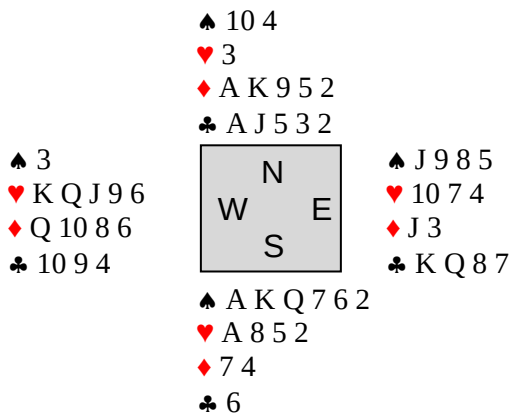
West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♣	Pass	4♠
Pass	6♠	All pass	

After this exuberant bidding, West leads the ♥K against 6♠. How will you play the contract?

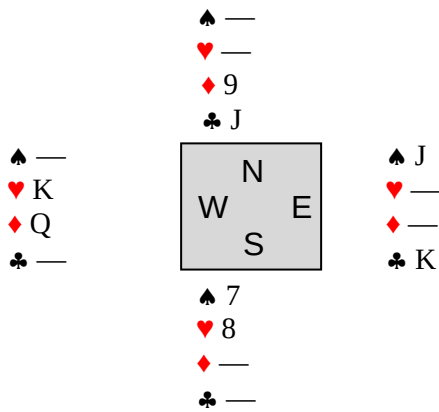
Bidding tip

You can imagine that some North players would bid 3NT at their second turn. ‘I had a strong stopper in clubs, partner, and no fit for either of your suits.’ It would not be a good bid because partner might well hold a 6-card spade suit, as was the case here.

SOLUTION 25



West leads the ♥K against 6♠. You win and ruff a heart. After the ♣A and a club ruff, you ruff another heart with the ♠10. It may seem that you now need a 3-2 trump break. Not necessarily! If you can score your three low trumps by ruffing, you may be able to collect four side-suit winners and a total of eight trump tricks. You ruff another club in your hand and play the ♠A-K-Q, seeing the 4-1 break. You cash the ♦A-K, leaving this position:



When you lead a diamond (or a club) from dummy, there is nothing that East can do. If he ruffs with the ♠J, your ♠7 will be promoted. If instead East discards on the trick, you will ruff with the ♠7 to bring your total to twelve.

Point to remember

A common method of evading a bad trump break is to ‘score the low trumps in your hand’. Here you were able to make the contract by ruffing with the ♠7, ♠6 and ♠2.

PROBLEM 26

♠ 10 8 5
♥ 7 6 4
♦ A 9 4 2
♣ Q 8 4

♠ K led

N
W E
S

♠ 9 3
♥ A K Q 10 2
♦ K Q
♣ A J 7 5

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

You show a good hand when you start with a take-out double and then bid a new suit over partner’s response. North realizes that his hand contains some potential and invites a game with a raise to 3♥.

West leads out the three top spades against your game in hearts and you ruff the third round. When you play the ♥A, West follows with the ♥J. It seems that the trumps are breaking 4-1. How will you continue the play?

Bidding tip

When you bid in the protective seat, after two passes, you tend to keep the bidding alive on less strength than you would need for the same action in the second seat. A popular measure is that you ‘borrow a king’. You overcall or double on a hand that may be a king lighter than the minimum in the second seat. Even so, South couldn’t afford to rebid any higher than 2♥ on this hand. North quite rightly made a game try and the eventual game contract was a sound one, as you see.

SOLUTION 26

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

West leads the three top spades against 4♥. You ruff the third round and play the ♥A, West following with the ♥J. How will you continue?

Five trump tricks, three diamonds and two clubs will be enough for the contract. If your next move is to draw the remaining trumps, you will have no protection left in spades when you knock out the ♣K (which is probably held by West). You will have to play clubs before drawing all the trumps.

You play the ♦K and ♦Q, then a low club towards dummy. You intend to use the ♣Q as an entry to your third diamond winner. If West plays low, you will win with dummy's queen and cash the ♦A. You can then draw trumps and score the ten tricks that we visualized earlier. Suppose instead that West rises with the ♣K and plays a fourth round of spades. You will ruff in the dummy and East has no counter. If he overruffs, you will overruff in turn, draw trumps and claim the contract. If he does not overruff, you will be in dummy and can score the ♦A. Again ten tricks will be yours.

Can you imagine how the original declarer went down? He drew a second round of trumps before playing on clubs. When West showed out, as expected, declarer cashed the ♦K-Q and led a low club. West rose with the ♣K and played another spade, ruffed in the dummy. East then discarded his last club! Declarer could score the ♦A but he had no safe route back to his hand to draw the remaining trumps. A second round of clubs would be ruffed. A diamond ruff would leave him with one fewer trump than East.

Point to remember

You can imagine the original declarer thinking: 'How was I to know that a second round of trumps would be fatal?' He could place West with 5-1 shape in the major suits after the fall of the ♥J. If West's minor suits were 3-4 rather than 4-3, it was possible to visualize the defense that could beat the contract.

PROBLEM 27

♠ 6 4
♥ A Q 4
♦ 10 9 7 5
♣ A K 4 3

♥J led

N
W E
S

♠ A K Q 10 8 5
♥ K 5 2
♦ K Q J
♣ 6

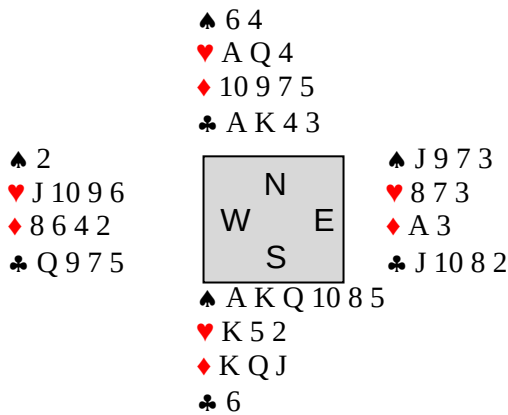
West	North	East	South
	1NT	Pass	3♠
Pass	3NT	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♠
All pass			

North opens a 12-14 point 1NT and initially shows disinterest in a spade slam. You bid to a small slam regardless and win the ♥J lead with the ♥K. You play two top trumps and West discards the ♦2 on the second round. You have a certain diamond loser and must find some way to avoid losing a trump trick as well. Any ideas?

Bidding tip

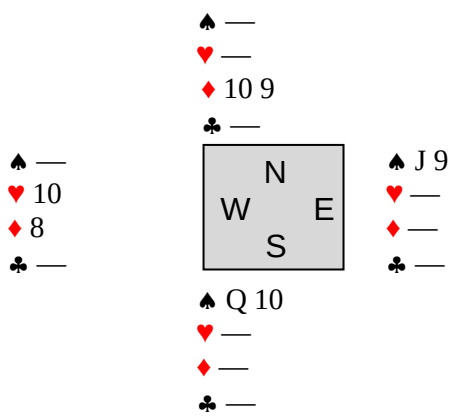
Look back to the auction for a moment. South’s 3♠ showed at least six spades and interest in a slam. A raise of 3NT to 4NT is sometimes a limit bid, inviting a slam, but not here. That meaning would not make much sense when South has shown at least six spades. It is Roman Key-card Blackwood, with spades agreed as trumps.

SOLUTION 27



West leads the ♥J against ♠6. You win with the ♥K and play two top trumps, West throwing a diamond on the second round. With a certain diamond loser, you must aim for a **trump coup** to pick up East's ♠J-9. What does that mean? You must set up a 2-card end position where the lead is in dummy and you have ♠Q-10 sitting over East's ♠J-9.

You cross to the ♣A and cash the ♣K, discarding the ♦J. (You need East to be 4-3-2-4, to give you two further heart entries to dummy.) You then ruff a club low and play the ♦K. East wins with the ace and returns a diamond to your queen. You cross to a heart, ruff dummy's last club with the ♠8 and return to dummy with a third round of hearts. These cards remain:



With the hard work already done, you lead a diamond from dummy. You will overruff whichever trump East plays and claim your slam.

PROBLEM 28

♥2 led

♠ Q J 5
♥ 7 6
♦ Q J 10 9 3
♣ A K 6

N
W E
S

♠ A 10 9 4 2
♥ A 5
♦ A 6 5
♣ 9 7 5

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

North shows his three-card spade holding with a Support Double. How will you play the spade game when West leads the ♥2 to East's ♥J?

Bidding tip

Huge numbers of tournament players use and admire the Support Double convention. Those who speak against it generally need to use a double for some different purpose. The largest group spurning the convention are those who play the weak 1NT. When they have a strong 1NT hand but an insufficient stopper in the opponents' suit to rebid 1NT (or the bidding is at the two-level after a raise and they are not strong enough to bid 2NT), it is convenient to show their extra values with a double.

SOLUTION 28

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

West leads the ♥2 against your spade game, East playing the ♥J. What is your plan?

You must win immediately or a club switch will defeat the contract. Next you turn your mind towards withstanding a 4-1 trump break. You may have to lose the lead twice more (once in trumps, once in diamonds) and the defenders can then force you in hearts if dummy's trumps are exhausted. What can you do about it?

Suppose you continue with ace and another trump. West will hold up the king for one round. If you play another trump, West will win and force you; eventually you will lose control. If instead you leave West with ♠K-8 and set up the diamonds, West will force you when he wins his ♦K and score two trump tricks.

The winning play is to lead the ♠2 from your hand at Trick 2. West ducks and dummy's ♠Q wins. You now lead the ♠5 to the ♠10. If West wins, dummy's ♠J will guard against a force in hearts. If instead West ducks the first two rounds of trumps, you will simply cash the ♠A and play ace and another diamond, setting up dummy's side suit.

It is a more difficult hand than it may at first seem!

Point to remember

One of the most common ways to withstand a forcing defense is to make use of the shorter trump holding in dummy. If you can ruff the defenders' suit in the dummy, this will not damage the main trump length in your hand. Here you achieve this aim by making sure that you concede a trick to the trump king while dummy still contains at least one trump to deal with a third round of hearts.

PROBLEM 29

♥2 led

♠ 7 6

♥ 9 6 5 3

♦ 8 5 4 3 2

♣ 10 9

W

N

E

S

♠ A K Q 10 9 5

♥ 10

♦ A Q 9

♣ A K Q

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

West leads the ♥2, East winning with the ♥K and persisting with the ♥A. How will you play the contract?

Bidding tip

South is too strong to bid either 1♠ or 4♠ at his first turn. Quite rightly, he starts with a take-out double. What should he bid on the second round? A change of suit to 2♠ would show a good hand, but it would not be forcing. Would a leap to 3♠ be forcing? Players disagree on the matter, although the sequence certainly shows a great hand. South here took no risks, continuing with a cue-bid of 2♥, which is universally agreed to be game-forcing.

SOLUTION 29

♠ 7 6
♥ 9 6 5 3
♦ 8 5 4 3 2
♣ 10 9

♠ J 8 3 2
♥ Q 8 2
♦ J 7
♣ 6 5 4 3

♠ 4
♥ A K J 7 4
♦ K 10 6
♣ J 8 7 2

♠ A K Q 10 9 5
♥ 10
♦ A Q 9
♣ A K Q

W N E S

East opens the bidding with 1♥ and you end in 4♠. West leads the ♥2 to East's ♥K and he continues with the ♥A. How will you play the spade game?

Suppose that you ruff the second heart and play two top trumps, discovering the 4-1 break. You can sit back in your chair for as long as you like but there will be no way to recover! For many players, West's lead of the ♥2 suggests an honor in the suit. Whether or not that is the case, the fact that East won the first trick with the ♥K suggests that West holds the ♥Q. Since West did not venture a raise to 2♥, East is very likely indeed to hold the ♦K to make up his opening bid. You should therefore plan to take a diamond finesse.

Ruff the second heart, cash the ♣A-K and ruff the ♣Q to reach the dummy. You finesse the ♦Q successfully and only then test the trump suit. The 4-1 trump break will now come as a pleasant surprise to you. It means that your play of ruffing a winning club was the only way to make the contract!

Point to remember

It is surprising how often the presence of an extra high card in declarer's hand leads him astray. Suppose the ♣Q had been a low club instead. Declarer would then be forced to ruff a club in dummy, after which it would be natural to take the diamond finesse.

PROBLEM 30

♠ A K 6
♥ K 7 2
♦ K 8 4 3
♣ A Q 8

♣J led

N
W E
S

♠ J 10 9 3 2
♥ A 10 6 5 3
♦ A
♣ K 6

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♥
Pass	6♠	All pass	

A rough-and-ready auction carries you to 6♠. West leads the ♣J and you win with the ♣K. Since you can take only one trump finesse anyway, you might as well cash the trump ace first, in case East holds a singleton queen. No queen appears and you return to your hand with the ♦A to run the ♠J. You encounter mixed luck on this trick. The finesse wins but East shows out. It seems now that you have one trump loser and one heart loser. Can you see any possible escape from this situation?

Bidding tip

What should North bid on the second round? In the USA a jump to 3♠ would be forcing and easily the best bid. When this deal arose, North-South were playing old-fashioned Acol, with 3♠ non-forcing, so North had to bid the fourth suit. He could have bid a forcing 3♠ on the next round but... some players lose patience after a few rounds of bidding!

SOLUTION 30

♠ Q 8 7 5
♥ Q 8 4
♦ 10 7 5
♣ J 10 2

♠ A K 6
♥ K 7 2
♦ K 8 4 3
♣ A Q 8

N

W E

S

♠ J 10 9 3 2
♥ A 10 6 5 3
♦ A
♣ K 6

♠ 4
♥ J 9
♦ Q J 9 6 2
♣ 9 7 5 4 3

West leads the ♣J and you win with the ♣K. You cash the ♠A, in case East holds a singleton queen, return to your hand with the ♦A and run the ♠J, East showing out. You seem to have one trump loser and one heart loser, but you may survive by employing a maneuver known as a Smother Play. You need West's shape to be 4-3-3-3. You ruff a diamond in your hand and cash all the other side-suit winners, leaving this position with dummy on play:

♠ Q 8
♥ Q
♦ —
♣ —

♠ K
♥ 7
♦ 4
♣ —

N

W E

S

♠ 10 9
♥ 10
♦ —
♣ —

♠ —
♥ —
♦ Q J
♣ 9

When you lead the ♦4, East wins and you throw the last heart from your hand. There is nothing that West can do. If he throws his heart, the enforced minor-suit return from East will catch the trump queen in a guillotine. You will ruff with the ♠10 and West cannot score the ♠Q, whether he overruffs or not. Nor is it any better for West to ruff partner's diamond winner, of course. His ♠Q would then fall under the ace.

(I did warn you that the last deal in every chapter would be a bit difficult!)

Chapter 4

A potpourri of small slams

Many decades ago the British international, Jeremy Flint, advocated ‘Operation Big Deal’. What did he mean by that? He meant that when an important deal arises, such as a slam or a part-score doubled into game, it is worth your while to put in a special effort.

In this chapter you can test yourself on some challenging small slams.

PROBLEM 31

♠ A 3

♥ K Q 9 8 7

♦ Q 8 6 3

♣ 6 3

♠K led

N

W E

S

♠ 10 6

♥ A J 6 3

♦ A K 2

♣ A Q J 5

West	North	East	South
			1♥
2♠	3♠	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♠	Pass	6♥
All pass			

Playing a 4-card major system, you open 1♥ on the South cards. West overcalls 2♠ and North’s 3♠ shows a sound raise to game in hearts. With hearts agreed as trumps, your 4♣ is a cue-bid. It shows a control in clubs (ace, king, singleton or void) and suggests a slam. North co-operates with a similar cue-bid in spades and you leap to the small slam.

West leads the ♠K.. What plan will you make?

Bidding tip

Although North happens to hold a spade control on this deal, his bid of 3♠ does not promise one. It merely shows a sound game raise.

SOLUTION 31

♠ A 3
♥ K Q 9 8 7
♦ Q 8 6 3
♣ 6 3

♠ K Q J 9 7 2
♥ 10 5 2
♦ —
♣ K 10 9 7

♠ 8 5 4
♥ 4
♦ J 10 9 7 5 4
♣ 8 4 2

♠ 10 6
♥ A J 6 3
♦ A K 2
♣ A Q J 5

W N E S

You reach 6♥ and West leads the ♠K to dummy's ace. You have possible losers in both spades and clubs. What chance is there of avoiding the spade loser? If diamonds break 3-3, you will be able to discard a spade on the thirteenth diamond.

Suppose the diamonds do not break 3-3. A successful club finesse might then rescue you. West's 2♠ overcall was a 'weak jump overcall', so it's possible that East holds the ♣K.

You win the spade lead and draw trumps in three rounds. When you play the $\spadesuit$ A, West shows out. What now? It would be premature to enter dummy for a club finesse. Instead you should exit with a second round of spades.

When West's opening lead was from the K-Q-J, as is quite likely, he will have to win the trick. With no red cards left, he must lead a black suit. If he plays a club, you will win with the jack, cash the ace and ruff your remaining two club losers. Suppose West returns another spade instead. You will discard a club from dummy and ruff in your hand. Dummy has only two trumps left to deal with the ♣Q-J-5, so you will need to take either a straight finesse or a ruffing finesse in clubs. West's reluctance to exit in clubs suggests that he holds the ♣K. You play the ♣A and lead the ♣Q. If West does not cover, you will run the card and throw a diamond from dummy.

Point to remember

One of the most common and productive techniques is ‘elimination play’. You eliminate one or more suits and then throw a defender on lead while you still have trumps in both hands. Since the return of an eliminated suit will give you a ruff-and-sluff, he may have to assist you by playing another suit.

PROBLEM 32

♠ A 2

♥ A 9 6 5

♦ A Q J 3

♣ A 4 3

♠Q led

N

W E

S

♠ K 6 4 3

♥ K 8

♦ K 5 4 2

♣ K 8 6

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

West’s 2♦ is a Michaels Cue-bid, showing a possibly moderate hand with at least 5-5 shape in the major suits. North bids 2♠, an artificial bid in one of West’s suits, to show a sound raise in diamonds. Since North-South are playing a strong 1NT, South’s 2NT rebid indicates a 12-14 point hand. North wastes no further time, leaping all the way to 6♦.

How will you play this slam when West leads the ♠Q?

Point to remember

Whenever an opponent enters the bidding to show a two-suited hand (with a Michaels Cue-bid or the Unusual No-trump), they give you potentially valuable information about their hand. You can often make good use of it if you end up playing the contract.

SOLUTION 32

♠ A 2
♥ A 9 6 5
♦ A Q J 3
♣ A 4 3

♠ Q J 10 8 5
♥ Q J 10 7 2
♦ 7
♣ J 5

W N E S

♠ K 6 4 3
♥ K 8
♦ K 5 4 2
♣ K 8 6

♠ 9 7
♥ 4 3
♦ 10 9 8 6
♣ Q 10 9 7 2

West, who has shown at least 5-5 shape in the majors with a Michaels Cuebid, leads the ♠Q against 6♦. How will you play the hand?

You have six top winners in the side suits and will need to add six trump tricks to bring the total to twelve. Ruffing two spades in the dummy is not promising, because the bidding tells you that East holds at most a doubleton spade. If you ruff with the $\spadesuit 3$ at any stage, East will be able to overruff. Any time that you ruff a spade with a trump honor, you risk promoting a trump trick for East.

A better idea is to aim to ruff two hearts in the South hand. If you can score two ruffs with low trumps, you will have enough trump honors to draw trumps against a 4-1 break.

You win the spade lead with dummy's ace and continue with the king and ace of hearts. When you lead a third round of hearts from dummy, East attempts to thwart your plan by ruffing with the $\spadesuit 8$. You overruff with the $\spadesuit K$ and continue with the ace and queen of trumps, West showing out on the second round.

East has no counter when you lead dummy's last heart. If he discards, you will ruff with the ♦5 and return to dummy to draw East's last trump. Nor does East fare any better by ruffing the last heart with the ♦10. In that case you will discard a club loser. You will then be able to score your last two trumps separately, ruffing a spade in dummy and a club in your hand.

Point to remember

You can see how helpful West's Michaels Cue-bid was on this deal. It painted a clear picture of his major-suit lengths and warned you that a 4-1 trump break was more likely than normal.

PROBLEM 33

♠ A 7 6 4
♥ 8 4
♦ A K 10
♣ K J 3 2

♠ K led

N
W E
S

♠ —
♥ A Q J 10 9 3
♦ 8 3
♣ A 10 9 7 4

West	North	East	South
	1NT	Pass	2♦
3♠	Pass	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	6♥
All pass			

Let’s admit that it was a fairly scrappy auction. North opened with a 15-17 point 1NT and South responded with a transfer bid to show his hearts. When West’s intervention of 3♠ ran back to South, he showed his club suit. North’s cue-bid in diamonds agreed clubs on the face of it and South jumped to 6♥.

Well, we don’t have to like the bidding. West leads the spade king and you win with dummy’s ace, ditching a club. A trump finesse loses to West’s king. You ruff the spade continuation, East following, and draw the remaining trumps, finding that West began with three trumps.

Everything depends on how you play the club suit. What do you plan to do there?

SOLUTION 33

♠ A 7 6 4

♥ 8 4

♦ K 10 8

♣ A J 3 2

♠ K Q J 10 9 8 5

♥ K 9 7

♦ 5

♣ Q 8

♠ —

♥ A Q J 10 5 3

♦ A 3

♣ K 10 9 7 4

N

W E

S

♠ 3 2

♥ 6 2

♦ Q J 9 7 6 4 2

♣ 6 5

West, who overcalled 3♠, leads the ♠K against your small slam in hearts. You win with dummy’s ace, ditching a club. A trump finesse loses to West’s king. You ruff the spade continuation, East following, and draw the remaining trumps, finding that West began with three trumps. Everything depends on how you play the club suit. How will you decide what to do?

You expect West to hold seven spades for his 3♠ bid. He has also shown up with three hearts. If you had to guess the club suit immediately, you would play dummy’s ♣A and then finesse East for the ♣Q on the second round. That’s because East has nine vacant places to accommodate the ♣Q compared with three in the West hand.

There is no need to make an early decision in clubs. After drawing trumps you should cross to the ♦K and ruff a spade in your hand. East shows out, as expected, and you now know for sure that West began with seven spades. All will be revealed when you next play the ♦A. West shows out. Right, so his shape must have been 7-3-1-2. You play the ace and king of clubs, dropping the queen, and the slam is home.

If West had followed to the ♦A, this would leave room for at most one club in his hand. You would cross to the ♣A and finesse East for the ♣Q on the second round.

Point to remember

Whenever you have a critical queen guess to make, try first to discover as much as possible about the distribution of the other suits. The player who is known (or is more likely) to hold the greater number of cards in the key suit will be favourite to hold the missing queen.

PROBLEM 34

♠ 6 5
♥ A 9 5
♦ A K 8 5 4
♣ 5 3 2

♣J led

N
W E
S

♠ A K Q J 9
♥ K 8 7
♦ 7 6
♣ A K 8

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

South’s 4NT was Roman Key-card Blackwood, on the assumption that diamonds were agreed as trumps. North’s response of 5♣ showed 0 or 3 key cards. South could assume that it was three (two aces and the ♦K) and promptly bid the small slam in spades.

What is your plan for the play when West leads the ♣J?

Bidding tip

It can be a useful bidding device to pretend to agree partner’s suit as trumps before unleashing Roman Key-card Blackwood. When you subsequently return to your own main suit, either at the 5-level or the 6-level, partner should pass.

SOLUTION 34

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

West leads the ♣J against your small slam in spades. You win with the ace and draw trumps in three rounds. You start with potential losers in hearts and clubs. The only way to dispose of one or both of these is to set up dummy's diamond suit. What is the best play in diamonds?

Suppose you play the ace and king of diamonds and ruff a diamond. All will go sweetly if the suit breaks 3-3. You can return to dummy with the ♥A and discard both your losers on the ♦8-5, making an overtrick. When diamonds break 4-2, which is more likely, life will not be so much fun. You will score only two diamond tricks and go down.

Let's try something different. Suppose you duck a round of diamonds after drawing trumps. You win the heart or club return in the South hand, cross to the ♦A and play the ♦K. When the suit fails to break 3-3, you are still alive! You ruff a diamond, setting up the last card in the suit, and then cross to the ♥A to discard one of your losers.

Point to remember

The notion of ducking a round of a suit is familiar from play in no-trumps. It can be just as valuable in a suit contract. Suppose you want to establish dummy's ♣A-10-8-7-6-3 opposite your ♣5-2 and have only one side entry to dummy. You duck the first round, cross to the ♣A when you regain the lead and ruff a club. On this deal a similar duck protected you against a 4-2 diamond break.

PROBLEM 35

♥Q led

♠ 10 5 2

♥ 7 2

♦ A K 3

♣ A J 10 6 3

N

W E

S

♠ A K Q J 8 4

♥ A K

♦ J 10 2

♣ 7 5

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♠
5♥	Pass	Pass	6♠
All pass			

West’s five-level intervention is the sort of bid that many people make, hoping to cause a problem for the opponents. This tactic offers no guarantee of success. In many cases it will help the other side to bid accurately, by warning them of bad breaks. Just as often it will assist the eventual declarer in the play.

On to the play! How would you tackle 6♠ when West leads the ♥Q, East following with the ♥4?

SOLUTION 35

♠ —
♥ Q J 10 9 8 6 5 3
♦ 9 7 6 4
♣ 2

♠ 10 5 2
♥ 7 2
♦ A K 3
♣ A J 10 6 3

♠ 9 7 6 3
♥ 4
♦ Q 8 5
♣ K Q 9 8 4

♠ A K Q J 8 4
♥ A K
♦ J 10 2
♣ 7 5

W N E S

West, who attempted to make life awkward for you with an overcall of 5♥, leads the ♥Q against your small slam in spades. East follows suit, you are pleased to see, and you win with the ♥A. How will you continue?

West's bid makes it likely that East will hold only one heart (certainly no more than two hearts). You draw trumps in four rounds, throwing two clubs from the dummy. You then cash your remaining heart honor, just in case East has another heart. He discards a club and you now know that he holds only minor-suit cards. You play a club to the jack and queen, leaving East end-played. Whichever minor suit he returns, he will give you an extra trick in that suit and the contract.

It's no better for the defense if West leads his singleton club. You win with dummy's ace, draw trumps and cash the two heart winners. Again you play a club to the jack, won by East. Since you have no more clubs in your hand, East cannot safely play a third round of clubs. He will be forced to surrender the slam once again.

Point to remember

The play known as the throw-in sometimes requires you to have an exact count on the defender's hand. This is easier to obtain when an opponent has entered the auction with a pre-emptive bid. On this deal West was known to have a huge number of hearts, so it was easy to strip East down to the minor suits.

PROBLEM 36

♥9 led

♠ K 5 4 2

♥ K J 4

♦ 8

♣ Q 9 8 5 2

N

W E

S

♠ 3

♥ A Q 7 6 5 3

♦ A K J 5

♣ A K

West	North	East	South
			2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♦	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♥
All pass			

Many years ago a second-round jump by the responder, after a 2♣ opening, showed a one-loser suit. That was a pretty rare situation and the understanding by North-South here was that 4♦ agreed hearts and showed at most one diamond. In other words, it was a splinter bid. North’s subsequent 5♦ response to Roman Key-card Blackwood showed one key-card (the king of trumps).

You win the trump lead with dummy’s king, cash your two top diamonds and ruff a diamond with the ♥4. You are over the first hurdle when East follows suit. You cross to your hand with the ♣A and ruff your last diamond with dummy’s bare ♥J, both defenders following. Now comes the problem. How should you attempt to return to your hand?

Bidding tip

I’m sure you know players who would leap straight to 6♥ over 4♦. ‘When you made that splinter bid I was sure you would hold the ♥K,’ they say, after going one down. It takes only a few seconds to bid 4NT and study partner’s response. Don’t be one of those players who like to display their ‘expertise’ by omitting this important step.

SOLUTION 36

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

Unwilling to lead from a side-suit honor, West leads the ♥9 against 6♥. You win with dummy's ♥K, cash the ♦A-K and ruff a diamond with the ♥4. You return to your hand with the ♣A and ruff your last diamond with dummy's bare ♥J, the diamond suit breaking 4-4. These cards remain:

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

How should you return to your hand, to draw the outstanding trumps? When the original declarer tried a second round of clubs to the king, East struck with a ruff and promptly cashed the ♠A for one down.

A better effort would be to lead the ♠4 instead of a club. However, you will still go down if East is bright enough to play low, allowing his partner to win and deliver a club ruff.

The very best play is to lead dummy's ♠K! This halves the chance that the defenders can score a club ruff. As the cards lie, East has to win the trick. He cannot then prevent you from reaching your hand with a spade ruff to draw trumps and claim your slam.

PROBLEM 37

♠ 9 3
♥ Q J 7 2
♦ 7 5 2
♣ A 8 3 2

♦J led

N
W E
S

♠ A Q 5 4
♥ A K 6 5
♦ A K Q
♣ K 10

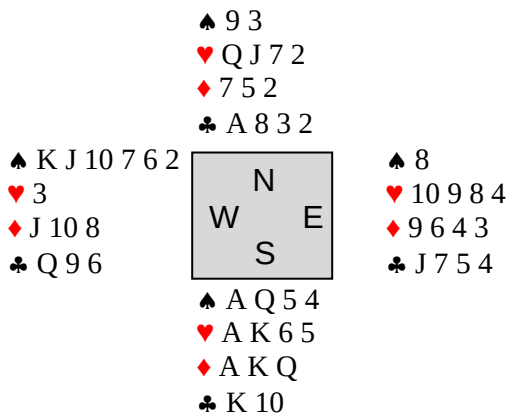
West	North	East	South
			2♣
2♠	Pass	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♥
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♥
All pass			

North’s bid of 4♣ was Stayman, looking for a 4-4 heart fit. West leads the ♦J to your ♦A and you play the ace and king of trumps, West discarding a spade on the second round. How will you continue?

Bidding tip

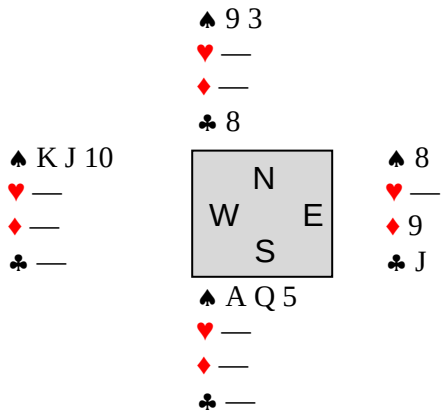
Have you discussed with your partner the bidding after a 2♣ opening and a 3NT rebid? One easy scheme to remember is to use similar methods as over a 2NT rebid. 4♣ is Stayman, 4♦ and 4♥ are transfer bids for the majors. You can also use 4♠ as minor-suit Stayman and 4NT as a limit raise.

SOLUTION 37



West leads the ♦J against your small slam in hearts and you win with the ace. You play the ace and king of trumps, finding that West started with a singleton. You continue with the king and ace of clubs, followed by a club ruff. You have bumped your trick total from 10 to 11, but there is no convenient entry to dummy to score a further club ruff.

You must turn your mind towards an end-play on West. You cash your remaining diamond honors and cross to dummy with a trump. After drawing East's remaining trump, these cards remain:



You run the ♠9. Since West was dealt all three spades higher than the nine, he has to win. The enforced spade return into the ♠A-Q gives you the slam.

Suppose West had discarded the ♠10, keeping ♠K-J-7 as his last three cards in the hope of avoiding the end-play. It would then have been necessary for you to lead the ♠9 (rather than the ♠3) to prevent East's ♠8 from winning the first round.

PROBLEM 38

♠ A 10 6
♥ A K 2
♦ 10 7 6
♣ A Q J 5

♦K led

N
W E
S

♠ K Q J 9 8 7
♥ 3
♦ A 8 5 4 3
♣ 2

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♣	Pass	6♠
All pass			

The bidding was not particularly scientific. From South’s point of view, all was likely to depend on North’s diamond holding. After discovering that North held three aces, he hoped for the best in diamonds and leapt to the small slam. How would you play it when West leads the ♦K?

Bidding tip

Although the slam is not a particularly impressive contract, it was difficult for South to judge the prospects during the auction. North had shown three aces and still had around 6 points to come. The ♦K or ♦Q-J would make the slam excellent. If North held the ♦Q or a doubleton diamond, there would be some play for twelve tricks. While leaping to 6♠ may seem risky, it would be even more risky to stop in 4♠ when a slam could be cold.

SOLUTION 38

	♠ A 10 6										
	♥ A K 2										
	♦ 10 7 6										
	♣ A Q J 5										
♠ 4		♠ 5 3 2									
♥ J 9 7 6		♥ Q 10 8 5 4									
♦ K Q J 9		♦ 2									
♣ K 10 9 3		♣ 8 7 6 4									
	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ K Q J 9 8 7										
	♥ 3										
	♦ A 8 5 4 3										
	♣ 2										

How will you play 6♠ when West leads the ♦K?

Prospects look poor but you're likely to make the slam when West has the ♣K. One chance is to find him with ♣K-x-x. You could finesse the ♣Q, play the ♣A and ruff a club to bring down the king. You would then have discards for three of your losing diamonds (two on clubs and one on hearts).

A better line is to play six rounds of trumps. West will throw one diamond and all four hearts, reducing to ♦Q-J and ♣K-10-9-3. You finesse the ♣Q to leave this end position:

	♠ —										
	♥ A K										
	♦ 10										
	♣ A J										
♠ —		♠ —									
♥ —		♥ Q 10									
♦ Q J		♦ —									
♣ K 10 9		♣ 8 7 6									
	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ —										
	♥ 3										
	♦ 8 5 4 3										
	♣ —										

You now play dummy's two heart winners. West can afford one club discard but has no good card to play on the second heart. If he throws another club, dummy's ♣A-J will be good. If instead he throws a diamond winner, he will be thrown in with a diamond. He will then have to lead a club from the king into dummy's ♣A-J tenace. The play is known as a 'strip squeeze'.

PROBLEM 39

♠ J 10
♥ A J 10 5
♦ A 8 4 3
♣ Q 7 6

♠ 3 led

N
W E
S

♠ A K Q 9 8 6
♥ K 9
♦ K 9 7
♣ K 8

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

North-South were playing a strong 1NT, so the 1NT rebid showed 12-14 points. South’s 3♠ was forcing; he would have used a check-back 2♣ on a hand of game-try strength. 4♦ was a cue-bid and South employed RKCB to reach a small slam in spades.

West leads a low trump, won in the dummy. When you play a second round of trumps, East shows out, discarding a club. How will you continue the play?

Bidding tip

It is important to have at least one check-back bid available after partner has rebid 1NT. The purpose of such bids is to investigate major-suit fits. (Some pairs use both 2♣ and 2♦ as check-back, with the latter bid forcing to game.) Once your partnership has decided on its check-back arrangement, you must also agree whether bids such as South’s 3♠ here will be forcing.

SOLUTION 39

♠ J 10
♥ A J 10 5
♦ A 8 4 3
♣ Q 9 6

♠ 7 5 4 3
♥ Q 8 4
♦ J 6 2
♣ J 5 3

N

W

E

S

♠ A K Q 9 8 6
♥ K 3
♦ K 9 7
♣ K 8

♠ 2
♥ 9 7 6 2
♦ Q 10 5
♣ A 10 7 4 2

How will you play 6♠ when West leads the ♠3?

You win the trump lead in the dummy and lead another trump, East throwing a club. The best plan is to guess which defender holds the ♣A and to lead a low club through his hand. He cannot afford to rise with the ♣A or you will have two club winners and a discard for your diamond loser. When the defender plays low, you will win the trick and draw the remaining trumps. You can then play the ♥K, ♥A and ♥J, throwing your last club. Even if the ♥J loses to the ♥Q, dummy's ♥10 will be established for a diamond discard.

Which defender is more likely to hold the ♣A? West holds four trumps to East's one. So, East has 12 vacant places in his hand for the ♣A and West has only 9. At Trick 3, you therefore lead the ♣6 from dummy. East plays low and you win with the ♣K. The play then proceeds as described above. You discard the ♣8 on the ♥J, West winning the trick with the ♥Q. You can then claim the contract, throwing your diamond loser on the ♥10.

Point to remember

The key technique on the deal is the ‘loser-on-loser play’, where you lead the ♥J and discard the ♣8. Nothing is gained on this trick directly; you are merely exchanging a club loser for a heart loser. The benefit comes when the ♥10 is established. You can then use that card to dispose of your loser in the diamond suit.

PROBLEM 40

♠ K 4
 ♥ A Q J 9 7
 ♦ 8 4 2
 ♣ A 6 4

♦K led

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A J
 ♥ K 8 5 4
 ♦ A J 3
 ♣ K Q 7 2

West	North	East	South
			1♥
2NT	3♦	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♣	Pass	6♥
All pass			

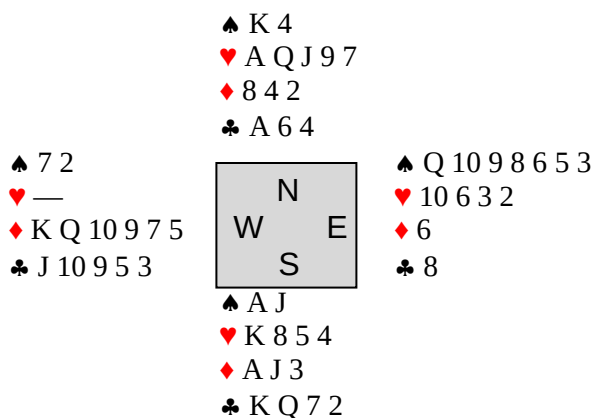
North-South were playing Acol, a 4-card major system. South duly opened 1♥ and West's 2NT overcall was the Unusual No-trump, showing a two-suiter in the minors. North's bid of 3♦ was part of the method known as 'Unusual over Unusual'. By bidding the higher of the opponent's suits, he showed a sound raise to 3♥ at least. South deemed it premature to suggest a slam initially and suggested 3NT as a resting place. Only when North advanced with a cue-bid of 4♣, did South venture a small slam in hearts.

How would you play the contract when West leads the ♦K?

Bidding tip

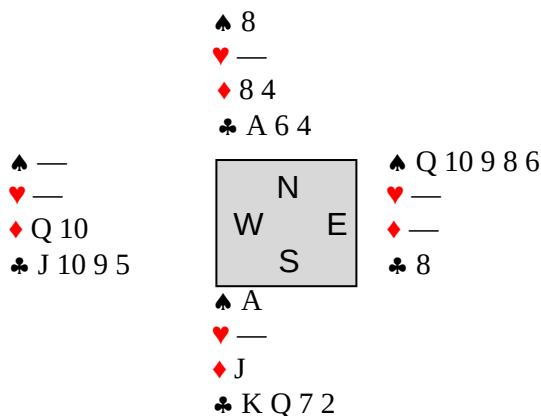
When an opponent makes a two-suited overcall against you, the next player can make good use of the bids in the suits that have been shown. A bid in the higher suit is normally used to show a sound raise in the opener's suit. If North had bid only 3♥ instead, this would show a normal raise to 2♥.

SOLUTION 40



West leads the ♦K against your small slam in hearts. You know from the bidding that West has length in both minors, so you should aim to squeeze him (to force him to discard one of his minor-suit guards). Often it is beneficial to lose an early trick, to tighten the end position. Here it would be dangerous to duck the ♦K because East might be able to ruff a diamond continuation.

You win the first diamond and play five rounds of trumps, followed by the ♠K. You will reach this position:



When you play the ♠A, West has no good discard. If he throws a club, you will score your twelfth trick in that suit. If instead he throws the ♦10, you will give him a diamond trick, setting up the ♦8 as your twelfth trick.

Chapter 5

Golden Oldies

Every once in a while I encounter a Golden Oldie — in other words a deal from decades ago. (If anyone picks up this book in 50 years time, in some dusty corner of a book-shop, they will doubtless regard every deal as a Golden Oldie!)

Card-play problems are timeless, of course, but sometimes you will be able to tell from the bidding that it is a deal from a bygone era.

PROBLEM 41

♠ J 9 8

♥ K 7 3

♦ A Q 10 2

♣ A Q 2

♠ A K Q 10 6

♥ A Q 4 2

♦ 4

♣ 10 5 4

♠

♥

♦ 8 led

♣

N

W

E

S

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

This deal, featuring the top Canadian player, Sam Gold, is a ‘Golden Oldie’ in more than one way. Back in the 1950s, the 3NT response showed a 4-3-3-3 hand including only 3-card spade support. Since there was known to be at least a 5-3 spade fit, you might think that South’s 4♥ was a slam suggestion. However, North’s next bid of 4♠ suggests that 4♥ was natural and seeking a 4-4 fit in that suit.

Let’s agree that the auction was poor by today’s standards. This is a book on card-play rather than bidding, of course. What plan would you have made when West leads the ♦8?

SOLUTION 41

	♠ J 9 8										
	♥ K 7 3										
	♦ A Q 10 2										
	♣ A Q 2										
♠ 5 4 2		♠ 7 3									
♥ 10 8		♥ J 9 6 5									
♦ 8 7 6 5		♦ K J 9 3									
♣ J 9 8 7		♣ K 6 3									
	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K Q 10 6										
	♥ A Q 4 2										
	♦ 4										
	♣ 10 5 4										

How would you play 6♠ when West leads the ♦8?

Sam Gold won with the ♦A and embarked on a dummy reversal. He ruffed a diamond with the ♠A and led the ♠10 to dummy's ♠J. After ruffing another diamond with the ♠K, he crossed to the ♠8. A final diamond ruff with the bare ♠Q was followed by a heart to the king.

Declarer drew the last trump with dummy's ♠9, throwing a club from his hand. The main chance of making the slam was that hearts would divide 3-3. Declarer would then be able to discard one of dummy's two club losers on the thirteenth heart. When he continued with the ace and queen of hearts, East showed up with four cards in the suit. No matter! The diamond suit had been removed from the scene, so when East was thrown on lead with the last heart he had to lead dummy's ♣A-Q. Very well played!

Point to remember

Suppose you are in a suit contract with five trumps in your hand and three in the dummy, including all the honors. If you draw trumps immediately, you will score five trump tricks. If instead you take a ruff in the 3-card trump holding before drawing trumps, you will make a total of six trump tricks.

Ruffing in the long-trump hand does not normally give you an extra trick. On this deal, declarer took three ruffs in the long-trump holding. This allowed him to score three trump tricks in dummy plus three ruffs in his hand – again a total of six. That is the basis of the play known as the ‘dummy reversal’.

PROBLEM 42

♥10 led

♠ 5
♥ A K Q 9 4 3
♦ A 6 4 3
♣ 6 4

N
W E
S

♠ K J 10 8 3
♥ J
♦ —
♣ A Q 10 9 8 7 3

West	North	East	South
			1♣
3♠	4♥	Pass	5♣
Pass	6♣	All pass	

This deal arose many years ago in the European Junior Championships with Denmark facing Ireland.

What do you make of the Danish South's bid of 5♣? I think he should have passed 4♥. What did he plan to do with all those spades, playing with clubs as trumps?

North was entitled to bid a sixth club, as I see it, and the focus was now on West, who had to make the opening lead. He held all seven missing spades. If he had cashed the ♠A, as many players would, East would have shown out. A spade continuation would then allow East to overruff the dummy.

The Irish West gave declarer a chance by leading the ♥10. How would you have played the contract after this start?

SOLUTION 42

♠ 5
♥ A K Q 9 4 3
♦ A 6 4 3
♣ 6 4

♠ A Q 9 7 6 4 2
♥ 10 2
♦ 10 5 2
♣ 5

♠ —
♥ 8 7 6 5
♦ K Q J 9 8 7
♣ K J 2

♠ K J 10 8 3
♥ J
♦ —
♣ A Q 10 9 8 7 3

You arrive in 6♣ after West has overcalled 3♠. How will you play the slam when West leads the ♥10?

Spared a spade lead, the Danish declarer cleverly took advantage. He won with dummy's ♥A and, apparently abandoning all the winners in the entryless dummy, led the ♣4 to East's ♣2 and his ♣Q. When he continued with the ♣A, West showed out. This was very much to declarer's liking. East, who was marked with a void spade, was thrown on lead with a third round of trumps. With only red cards remaining, he had to give the lead to dummy. Away went declarer's five spade losers (on the ♥K-Q-9-4 and the ♦A) and the slam was made.

‘Why didn’t you lead the ace of spades?’ demanded East.

West was not prepared to take the blame. 'Your trumps were the K-J-2,' he replied. 'Play the jack and king on the first two rounds, keeping the two. He can't throw you in then and I make at least two spade tricks!'

Point to remember

Suppose West had a singleton $\clubsuit J$, East holding $\clubsuit K-5-2$. East would need to play the $\clubsuit 5$ on the first round. He could then unblock the $\clubsuit K$ under the $\clubsuit A$ to avoid the throw-in. In instead he played the $\clubsuit 2$ on the first round, it would do him no good to unblock the $\clubsuit K$ on the second round. He would have to win the third round with the $\clubsuit 5$.

PROBLEM 43

♠ A K 9 3

♥ 8 6 5

♦ A 8 4

♣ 10 7 6

♠Q led

N

W E

S

♠ 8 5 2

♥ A K Q J 9 4

♦ J 7

♣ K 3

West	North	East	South
2♠	Pass	Pass	4♥
All pass			

Who is or was the greatest card-player ever? Ask 100 international-standard players and you would get at least 20 different answers. My choice would be the great Tim Seres of Australia. See if you can replicate his efforts on this splendid deal.

West’s weak 2♠ runs to you in the fourth seat and you bid 4♥. (You would only have bid 3♥? Yes, so would I, but maybe we don’t play the cards as well as Seres did.)

There is no further bidding and West leads the ♠Q, North displaying a handsome dummy. He would have raised 3♥ to 4♥ anyway, as it happens. How will you tackle the play?

SOLUTION 43

♠ AK93
♥ 865
♦ A84
♣ 1076

♠ QJ10764
♥ 73
♦ Q52
♣ Q2

♠ —
♥ 102
♦ K10963
♣ AJ9854

♠ 852
♥ AKQJ94
♦ J7
♣ K3

Diagram illustrating a bridge hand layout. The cards are arranged in four columns. The first column contains the top half of the deck (♠ AK93, ♥ 865, ♦ A84, ♣ 1076). The second column contains the bottom half of the deck (♠ QJ10764, ♥ 73, ♦ Q52, ♣ Q2). The third column contains a dummy hand (♠ —, ♥ 102, ♦ K10963, ♣ AJ9854). The fourth column contains a hand (♠ 852, ♥ AKQJ94, ♦ J7, ♣ K3). A central box labeled 'N' (North) is positioned between the first and second columns, and 'S' (South) is positioned between the third and fourth columns. The box is labeled 'W' (West) on the left and 'E' (East) on the right.

West opened 2♠ and Tim Sereb bid 4♥ on the South cards after two passes. How would you play this contract when West leads the ♠Q?

Suppose you cover with one of dummy's honors and East ruffs, which is very likely on the bidding. A diamond switch (or the ♣A followed by a diamond switch) will beat the contract even when the ♣A is onside. Seres played the ♠3 from dummy at Trick 1 and the contract was then impregnable as the cards lay!

East discarded a club and West continued with the ♠J, covered and ruffed. Seres won East's diamond switch with dummy's ace and drew trumps. He then took the marked finesse of ♠9 and threw his remaining diamond on the ♠A. After this inspired start to the proceedings it would have been an injustice if ♣A was offside. No, a club to the king held the trick and Tim had his game.

Point to remember

Why would most players miss the winning line on this deal? The answer is that they would never even consider it! No doubt you're familiar with the concept of 'lateral thinking' – solving problems by employing unorthodox or apparently illogical means. One of the reasons why great players such as Tim Seres find so many wonderful plays is that they do not constrain their thoughts to making the obvious play on each trick.

Mind you, I remember several times when I have gone down in a contract only to wish that I *had* made the obvious play on one of the tricks!

PROBLEM 44

♥K led

♠ A 6 5 4

♥ 9 4

♦ 9

♣ 10 8 7 5 4 2

N

W E

S

♠ K Q J 9 2

♥ A

♦ A K Q 7 5 4 2

♣ —

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	2♦
2♥	Pass	4♥	4♠
Pass	6♠	All pass	

This is a par hand constructed by Brisbane’s M.J.Sullivan in 1954. You’re unimpressed by the bidding? It is the auction that was originally given to all the contestants by the authors of the par contest. South’s opening bid was strong (I dare say you guessed that) and his rebid of 4♠ appears to be an underbid. Why not 5♠ on such a giant hand?

Anyway, we are concerned only with the play here. You win West’s ♥K lead with the ♥A and play the ♠K, West throwing a heart. What now?

Bidding tip

Strong two-bids were originally part of standard bidding in both the UK and USA. The main reason they were dropped is that their frequency was so low. Nowadays, 2♠ and 2♥ are normally either natural weak-tuos or they show a weak two-suiter in the named major and a minor. 2♦ can be a natural weak-two or the ‘Multi 2♦’, which covers various hand-types.

The Flannery 2♦, showing an opening-bid strength hand with 4 spades and 5+ hearts was memorably described by Terence Reese as ‘the worst bidding convention ever invented, covering a hand-type that causes absolutely no problems for natural bidding’. It’s amazing that so many top American players use it, in that case!

SOLUTION 44

♠ A 6 5 4
 ♥ 9 4
 ♦ 9
 ♣ 10 8 7 5 4 2

♠ —
 ♥ K Q J 6 5 3
 ♦ J 10 8 6 3
 ♣ K 3

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

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

W N
 S E

West, who overcalled 2♥ raised to 4♥ by his partner, leads the ♥K against your unambitious small slam in spades. You win with the ace and play the king of trumps, West throwing a heart. What now?

Suppose your next move is to play the $\heartsuit A$, preparing to ruff a diamond. You will go down! East will ruff and you will lose a further trick — either a diamond to West or a trump trick to East. How can you avoid this outcome?

After drawing at most two rounds of trumps, you should lead a low diamond from your hand, conceding a trick in the suit. The diamonds break 5-0, yes, but nothing can prevent you from ruffing a diamond with dummy's ♠A. You can then finesse the ♠9 and draw East's trumps, claiming the remainder.

It may seem a difficult play to find but look at it this way: what is the only risk to your contract? If diamonds break 4-1, you can simply draw trumps and give up a diamond trick. The only risk is that the diamond suit breaks 5-0. In that situation beginning with a top diamond will lead to defeat. Since you cannot afford to have a diamond honor ruffed, you need to duck the first round of diamonds.

Point to remember

You can imagine on this deal that many declarers would play the $\spadesuit$ A and say afterwards, ‘What incredibly bad luck! How on earth could I know that diamonds would be 5-0?’ It’s true that you cannot sit for ages, planning the play against a host of possible bad breaks. When there is only one bad break that can cause damage, you are justified in taking a moment to see if there is anything you can do to counter it.

PROBLEM 45

♠ 6 5 2
♥ Q 3
♦ A K Q 4 2
♣ J 5 4

♠ 10 led

N
W E
S

♠ A K Q J 8 3
♥ —
♦ 10 9 8 6
♣ A 10 3

West	North	East	South
	1♦	1♥	2♠
4♥	Pass	Pass	6♠
All pass			

South’s jump to 2♠ was a strong jump-shift. When his partner declined to double 4♥, it was reasonable to hope that there would be only one loser in the minor suits.

The deal was claimed to have been played in 1950 by American ace, Ozzie Jacoby. How would you tackle the spade slam when West leads the ten of trumps, East following suit?

Bidding tip

For many tournament players nowadays, a jump to 2♠ (over an overcall or take-out double) would be a ‘fit-jump’. It would show a good side suit in spades and primary support for the opener’s suit. There is no real need for the traditional strong jump shift, since 1♠ is forcing and you can bid strongly thereafter.

SOLUTION 45

	♠ 6 5 2										
	♥ Q 3										
	♦ A K Q 4 2										
	♣ J 5 4										
♠ 10 9 7		♠ 4									
♥ K 10 8 7 4		♥ A J 9 6 5 2									
♦ 5		♦ J 7 3									
♣ Q 8 7 2		♣ K 9 6									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K Q J 8 3										
	♥ —										
	♦ 10 9 8 6										
	♣ A 10 3										

Both the defenders bid hearts strongly and West leads the ♠10 against your small slam in spades. What is your plan?

It may seem a simple matter to score six trumps, the ♣A and five diamond tricks (unless diamonds happen to break 4-0). If you look carefully at the diamond pips, you can see that the suit will become blocked if one of the defenders holds ♦J-x-x. You will have to play the ♦A-K-Q to pick up the jack and the last spot-card in the South hand will be higher than the two remaining diamonds in dummy.

You win the trump lead and draw West's trumps in two more rounds. In the absence of a 2-2 break, dummy's third trump will not now provide an entry. When you play the ace and king of diamonds, West shows out on the second round. Do you see what to do next?

You must lead one of dummy's hearts and discard a diamond from your hand! You can then win the defenders' return and lead your last diamond to dummy's queen. With the blocking diamond no longer in your hand, you can score the ♦4 and ♦2, discarding your two club losers. The slam is yours.

Did Jacoby really play this deal in the manner described? In those days it was commonplace for writers to assign clever plays to their colleagues. Such outrageous behaviour is unheard of nowadays, it goes without saying!

Point to remember

On many deals potential blockages can be avoided by unblocking spot-cards from one of the hands. Suppose the diamonds on this deal had been ♦A-K-Q-4-2 in the dummy opposite ♦10-9-8-3 in your hand. You could play dummy's three top diamonds, dropping the 10, 9 and 8 from your hand. Dummy's ♦4 would win the fourth round and you could then score the ♦2.

PROBLEM 46

	♠ 5 3											
	♥ 7 5 3 2											
	♦ K Q J 10											
	♣ 9 4 2											
♣Q led	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S			
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ A K 9 8 6 2											
	♥ A K Q 10											
	♦ A											
	♣ A 5											
West	North	East	South									
			2♣									
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠									
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥									
Pass	4♥	Pass	7♥									
All pass												

This deal features J.G. Ripstra (the inventor of the Ripstra Defence to 1NT). He certainly showed no restraint in the bidding, leaping all the way to 7♥ at his fourth turn. He was following the principle that the quickest way to judge if a contract will be good is to bid it and then take a look at the dummy.

How would you play 7♥ when West leads the ♣Q? (When you play the two top trumps, both defenders will follow.)

Bidding tip

You are not familiar with the Ripstra Defence to 1NT? That's not surprising because it is a bit of a Golden Oldie in itself. A double was for penalties; 2♣ and 2♦ both showed at least 4-4 in the majors, with greater length in the bid minor. (This allowed partner to pass when he was short in the majors and could support partner's minor.) Overcalls of 2♠ and 2♥ were natural. You can see why it is now obsolete. There was too much emphasis on the major suits. For example, you could not express a hand with five cards in a minor and four in a major.

SOLUTION 46

	♠ 5 3										
	♥ 7 5 3 2										
	♦ K Q J 10										
	♣ 9 4 2										
♠ 4		♠ Q J 10 7									
♥ 8 6		♥ J 9 4									
♦ 7 6 5 3 2		♦ 9 8 4									
♣ Q J 10 8 6		♣ K 7 3									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K 9 8 6 2										
	♥ A K Q 10										
	♦ A										
	♣ A 5										

How would you play 7♥ when West leads the ♣Q to your ace?

Ripstra began with the ♥A-K, both defenders following. Suppose you draw the last trump and play the ♦A. When you continue with ♠A-K and a third spade, ruffed in the dummy, you will have three discards on dummy's diamonds. You will still have a spade loser unless the spades break 3-2.

Ripstra left one trump outstanding and played the ♦A and ♠A-K. If spades had broken 3-2, he would have drawn the last trump and made the grand easily. As it was, West showed out on the second spade but could not ruff (since East held the last trump). Ripstra ruffed a spade and played the ♦K-Q, throwing a club and a spade. This position had been reached:

	♠ —										
	♥ 7										
	♦ J										
	♣ 9 4										
♠ —		♠ Q									
♥ —		♥ J									
♦ —		♦ —									
♣ J 10 8 6		♣ K 3									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 9 8										
	♥ Q 10										
	♦ —										
	♣ —										

When the ♦J was led, East could not afford to throw the ♠Q. If instead he ruffed with the ♥J, declarer would overruff, establish his last spade with a ruff and claim. East's only remaining option was to throw a club. Declarer would then discard a spade and cross-ruff the last three tricks!

PROBLEM 47

♥Q led

♠ 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

♥ A K

♦ A 9 6

♣ —

W

N

E

S

♠ A K Q 2

♥ 9 8 7 5 3 2

♦ 5 4 2

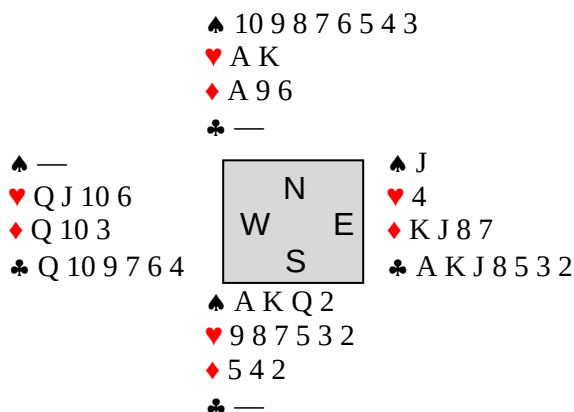
♣ —

West	North	East	South
3♣	6♠	1♣ All pass	1♠

This is a deal from an ancient Par Contest. The composers wanted South as declarer and therefore had him overcall on a 4-card spade suit - to suggest a good lead if West ended as declarer. How would you tackle the eventual small slam in spades when West leads the ♥Q?

(In fact the deal is slightly flawed as there are two solutions. No excuse, then, if you can't find at least one of them!)

SOLUTION 47



West leads the ♥Q against your contract of 6♠. You win in the dummy, draw the outstanding trump and pause to determine your continuation. Do you? I'm afraid any calculation will be wasted. With the hearts blocked and only two entries remaining to the South hand (the ♠K and ♠Q), you will not be able to make the slam.

The recommended solution was to win the heart lead with the ♥K and lead a trump, allowing East's ♠J to win! You can then face your cards, claiming the contract. Since you still have three trump entries to the South hand, nothing can stop you from unblocking the ♥A, using two trump entries to establish the hearts with two ruffs and returning to the third trump entry to enjoy the established winners.

What did you make of this line of play? Very pretty, yes, but it was a bit flamboyant. A better move would be to play dummy's second top heart at Trick 2. If one of the defenders ruffed, there would be no problem in setting up and enjoying the heart suit, discarding dummy's diamond losers. If no-one ruffed, you would to make an overtrick.

Point to remember

Playing dummy's second heart winner at Trick 2 is the right way to play a contract of 7♠. Although you would go down on the lie of the cards shown, this line allows you to make the grand slam when a defender holds four hearts and the lone outstanding trump.

PROBLEM 48

♥2 led

♠ A J
♥ A 9 7 5
♦ K 9 8 6 4
♣ K Q

N
W E
S

♠ 10 9 8 5 4 2
♥ 6
♦ A 5 2
♣ J 7 4

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

The play on this deal was attributed to Dick Kaplan, playing in Ashville, North Carolina, during the early 1950s. Like many such reported brilliancies, it is anyone’s guess whether Kaplan actually played the deal! This cynicism of mine was inherited from the great Terence Reese. ‘If you believe that, you’ll believe anything!’ he would say.

Anyway, how would you tackle 4♠ after a lead of the ♥2? When you play a trump to the ♠J at some stage, East will follow with the ♠6.

Bidding tip

You may wonder why South rebid 4♠ rather than 3♠. In most systems 3♠ is forcing and suggests a slam.

If you feel the need to play in three of a major after partner’s jump to 2NT (showing 18-19 points), you can use the ‘Wolff Sign-off’ convention. In this method South can continue with 3♣ on a weak hand, requesting the opener to bid 3♦. If the responder subsequently bids 3♠, this is a sign-off. If instead he were to rebid 3♥, this would ask partner to pass or correct to 3♠, depending on which suit he preferred.

SOLUTION 48

	♠ A J										
	♥ A 9 7 5										
	♦ K 9 8 6 4										
	♣ K Q										
♠ K Q 7 3		♠ 6									
♥ 10 3 2		♥ K Q J 8 4									
♦ 10 3		♦ Q J 7									
♣ 10 8 6 5		♣ A 9 3 2									
	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 10 9 8 5 4 2										
	♥ 6										
	♦ A 5 2										
	♣ J 7 4										

After a start of 1♦ – (1♥) – 1♠, South ends in 4♠ and West leads the ♥2. We are told that Kaplan won with the ♥A and played the ♣K to East’s ♣A. He ruffed the heart return low and led a trump towards dummy. West could not afford to split his honors or declarer would win with the ace and force out the other trump honor, losing just one trump trick. A finesse of dummy’s ♠J succeeded, East following with the ♠6.

If trumps were 3-2 declarer could simply play the ♠A next. Sensing that West had started with four trumps, Kaplan continued with the ♣Q and a diamond to the ace. He threw a heart on the ♣J and continued with a diamond to the king, followed by a second heart ruff. These cards remained:

	♠ A										
	♥ —										
	♦ 9 8 6										
	♣ —										
♠ K Q 7		♠ —									
♥ —		♥ Q 8									
♦ —		♦ Q									
♣ 10		♣ 9									
	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 10 9 8										
	♥ —										
	♦ 4										
	♣ —										

East won the diamond exit, West throwing the ♣10. South ruffed the return and West’s trumps were trapped in a vice. His expected two trump tricks were reduced to one and the game was made. This exotic endplay technique (much loved by those who write bridge books...) is a Smother Play.

PROBLEM 49

♠ 9 8 2
 ♥ K Q 9 4 3
 ♦ J 5 3
 ♣ J 3

♦10 led

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K Q 4
 ♥ J 10 5
 ♦ A Q 2
 ♣ A K 6 4

West	North	East	South
		3♣	3NT

All pass

This deal was played by the USA's Alfred Sheinwold, some 60 years ago, and demonstrates how a beautiful piece of dummy play shines brightly forever. West led the ♦10 against 3NT and Sheinwold won with the queen. The first two rounds of hearts were ducked and he persisted with a third heart to West's ace. West switched to the ♠5, East beating dummy's ♠9 with the ♠A. What would your plan be for this contract?

Bidding tip

South's 3NT overcall covers a wide range of points. You might try it on as few as 15/16 points, hoping for a good dummy. On other occasions, you would bid 3NT on 22 points, hoping not to miss a slam if a strong dummy went down.

There is little space for further bidding but it makes good sense to use 4♣ as Stayman, 4♥ and 4♥ as transfers, 4♠ as minor-suit Stayman and 4NT as a limit bid inviting 6NT.

SOLUTION 49

♠ 9 8 2
♥ K Q 9 4 3
♦ J 5 3
♣ J 3

♠ J 10 7 5
♥ A 8 6
♦ K 10 9 7 6 4
♣ —

W N E S

♠ K Q 4
♥ J 10 5
♦ A Q 2
♣ A K 6 4

♠ A 6 3
♥ 7 2
♦ 8
♣ Q 10 9 8 7 5 2

East opened 3♣ and Sheinwold overcalled 3NT, ending the auction. West led the ♦10 against 3NT and Sheinwold won with the queen. The first two rounds of hearts were ducked and he persisted with a third heart to West's ace. West switched to the ♠5, East beating dummy's ♠9 with the ace.

Sheinwold saw that if he followed with the ♠4, he would never be able to reach the dummy. He would score two tricks from each suit, for a total of eight, and that would be one down. Sheinwold unblocked the ♠Q under East's ♠A. He won the spade return with the ♠K, to leave this position:

♠ 8
♥ K Q
♦ J 5
♣ J 3

♠ J 10
♥ —
♦ K 9 7 6 4
♣ —

♠ 3
♥ —
♦ —
♣ Q 10 9 8 7 5

♠ 4
♥ —
♦ A 2
♣ A K 6 4

W N E S

Sheinwold now exited with the ♠4. West won and cashed a third spade trick for the defenders but he then had to lead a diamond from the king. Dummy's ♦J scored an extra trick and provided an entry to dummy's heart winners. The game was made. Suppose the lie of the cards had been different and East had won the third spade. He too would have been forced to give an entry to dummy, leading away from the ♣Q.

PROBLEM 50

♠ A K Q J 8 3
♥ 8 6
♦ K Q 10
♣ 5 4

♦9 led

N
W E
S

♠ 2
♥ K 10 9 7
♦ A J
♣ A K Q J 3 2

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

This deal was composed for a Waddington Par Contest by Terence Reese and Skid Simon in the late 1930s. Let’s look at the bidding first. A rebid of 3♠ by North would be forcing, after South’s strong jump shift, so his actual leap to 4♠ shows a solid suit. Since South also holds an apparently solid suit, he can see that 6NT will be a sound prospect. Just in case North also holds the ♥A, which would allow a grand slam to be bid, South asks for aces.

West leads the ♦9 against 6NT and you win with the ace. You play the ♣A and it is no surprise (in a Par Contest) when West shows out, discarding a heart. When you play the ♠A, West follows with the ♠9. On the next top spade he shows out again, throwing another heart. How will you continue?

SOLUTION 50

♠ A K Q J 8 3
 ♥ 8 6
 ♦ K Q 10
 ♣ 5 4

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

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

♠ 2
 ♥ K 10 9 7
 ♦ A J
 ♣ A K Q J 3 2

West (who overcalled 3♥) leads the ♦9 against 6NT. How will you play the slam?

There are 11 top tricks and if either black suit is good, you will have an easy 13 tricks. You play the ♣A, preparing to claim the contract with an overtrick, and West gives you a shock by showing out. When you take a look at the spade suit, West follows with the ♠9 on the first round and then shows out on the second round. How will you recover the situation?

The answer is to cash your two remaining diamond winners. On the third round of diamonds, East is pressed for a discard. He cannot afford his fifth card in spades or clubs, since he would set up a suit for you. He therefore has to discard his singleton heart. You can now play your remaining club winners and throw East on lead with the fifth round of clubs. East's last three cards are the ♠10-7-6 and he has to lead into dummy's ♠Q-J-8. Slam bid, slam made!

Point to remember

To give yourself a chance on this contract, you must notice the spot-card that West plays on the first round of spades (the ♠9). This leaves dummy's ♠Q-J-8 as a tenace against East. Do not be one of those players who stops to think, near the end of the hand: 'Oh no, which spade did West play on the first round?'

Chapter 6

Finding the extra chance

Once you spot a good chance of making a contract it is all too easy to accept that line of play without further thought. If you happen to go down, you may wonder – too late – if there was an extra chance available.

This chapter offers you ten problems where you can combine more than one chance of making the contract. The less obvious one may be the line that will succeed. Surprise, surprise!

PROBLEM 51

♣9 led

♠ Q 10 8

♥ J 6

♦ A 9 5 3 2

♣ 6 4 2

N
W E
S

♠ A K J 9 4

♥ A Q 7

♦ 8

♣ Q 10 8 5

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

Players nowadays are happy to make a simple overcall on a hand where old-timers would start with a take-out double. When North finds a spade raise, South bids the game with some confidence.

West leads the ♣9 to East's king and East continues with the ♣A and the ♣7. You finesse the ♣10 and West ruffs with the ♠5. A low diamond is returned and you win with dummy's ace. How will you continue?

SOLUTION 51

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

East opens 1♣ and you bid to a contract of 4♠ on the South cards. West leads the ♣9 to East’s ♣K and East continues with the ♣A and ♣7. You finesse the ♣10 and West ruffs with the ♠5. A low diamond is returned and you win with dummy’s ace. How will you play from this point?

It may seem that you need to find the ♥K with the opening bidder but there is an additional chance. You return to your hand by leading the ♠8 to the ♠9 and lead the master ♣Q. By good fortune West started with only two trumps and cannot ruff! You discard a heart from dummy and can then ruff the ♥Q and ♥7 with dummy’s Q-10 of trumps. You score the red aces, the ♣Q and no fewer than seven trump tricks.

Point to remember

This was a cost-nothing extra chance. Suppose West had been able to ruff the ♣Q. You would overruff with dummy’s ♠10 and revert to the other chance, finessing in hearts. If the finesse won, you would cash a second heart and ruff your last heart with dummy’s remaining trump.

PROBLEM 52

♠ J 7 2
♥ K 5 2
♦ J 4
♣ A K 9 8 6

♠ A led

N
W E
S

♠ 10 9 3
♥ A Q J 10 6
♦ A Q 10
♣ 4 2

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

North's two jacks were likely to be of little value and a cautious bidder might have raised to just 3♥ at his second turn. That's not the way that good players bid nowadays! They are much more likely to bid forwardly, particularly when there is a game at stake.

West launches the defense with three rounds of spades, East throwing the ♦2 on the third round. How will you play the contract when West switches to a trump at Trick 4?

SOLUTION 52

♠ J 7 2
♥ K 5 2
♦ J 4
♣ A K 9 8 6

♠ A K Q 6 4
♥ 9 3
♦ K 8 5
♣ Q 7 3

♠ 8 5
♥ 8 7 4
♦ 9 7 6 3 2
♣ J 10 5

♠ 10 9 3
♥ A Q J 10 6
♦ A Q 10
♣ 4 2

You bid to 4♥ after West has overcalled in spades. West scores his three spade honors, East discarding a diamond on the third round, and switches to a trump. What is your plan?

Show the deal at your local club and you will find players who answer: 'It all depends on the diamond finesse'. There is no need to rely solely on this chance. After winning the trump switch in your hand, you should cash the ace and king of clubs and ruff a club with the ♥10. If your luck is in and the suit breaks 3-3, you will play a second high trump from your hand. Should trumps break 3-2, you can draw the last trump with dummy's king and throw your two potential diamond losers on dummy's ♣9-8.

What if clubs are 4-2 or trumps are 4-1? You have lost nothing by looking for this extra chance. You can cross to the king of trumps and finesse in diamonds anyway. It is nearly always better to combine two chances rather than relying on just one.

Point to remember

When you are hoping to establish a side suit in dummy, it is often necessary to make full use of entries in the trump suit. Here you planned to use the ♥K as an entry to reach the ♣9-8, provided the clubs and hearts broke favourably.

Suppose the cards lay differently and you needed one extra trick from dummy's ♣A-K-8-7-2 opposite ♣5. You would need to take two ruffs in your hand (hoping that the clubs broke 4-3). The ♣A would be the entry for the first ruff, but you might have to use trump entries for the second ruff and to reach the eventual long card.

PROBLEM 53

♠ A J 8 3
♥ K 5 4
♦ A 10 3
♣ 8 6 5

♥J led

N
W S E
S

♠ K Q 9 2
♥ A 8
♦ K 9 2
♣ K 7 4 3

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

South opens a 15-17 point 1NT and North decides to bid Stayman despite holding a 4-3-3-3 hand.

How will you play the spade game when West leads the ♥J? (You will find that trumps break 3-2.)

Bidding tip

Although it would not have worked well on this deal, the majority of tournament players think it best to raise directly to 3NT when they have a 4-3-3-3 hand including a 4-card major. A 9-trick game may be easier to make even when you do have a 4-4 fit in the major. Also, you give away less information in the auction.

SOLUTION 53

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

West leads the ♥J against your game in spades. You win with the ♥A and draw trumps, finding a 3-2 break. What next?

You will make the contract easily if East holds the ♣A. Suppose you broach the club suit by leading low towards the ♣K. You will go down when West began with a singleton ♣A. You can pick up this extra chance by leading a low club from your hand on the first round.

When you make this play, West wins with the ♣10 and returns another heart to dummy's king. What now? If you lead to the ♣K on the second round, you will go down when West started with a doubleton ♣A. To give yourself yet another extra chance you should duck the second round of clubs. When the cards lie as above, West's ♣A will appear and the game is yours.

Nothing is lost by this line of play if the ♣A does not appear on the first two rounds. Suppose the defenders play a third heart, which you ruff. You will cross to the ♦A and, finally, lead dummy's last club towards the ♣K. If East began with such as ♣A-J-9-2, the ♣K will become your tenth trick.

If clubs are 3-3, whoever holds the ♣A, you will score the last three tricks with the ♦K, the thirteenth club and dummy's last trump. (Your intermediate cards in diamonds prevent the defenders from setting up a diamond trick before you score a club trick.)

Point to remember

You can often give yourself an extra chance by declining to take a key finesse on the first round. Suppose that the dummy has ♦A-Q-3-2 opposite your ♦9-6-4 and the contract seems to depend on a successful finesse. Try your luck with a lead of the ♦2 from dummy! When East has the ♦K and not the ♦J, he will often go in with the ♦K. If he doesn't, you can finesse the ♦Q on the second round.

PROBLEM 54

♠ A 10 9 4
♥ Q 8 4 3
♦ K 6
♣ A Q 6

♣4 led

N
W E
S

♠ K Q J 8 2
♥ J 7 5
♦ A Q 8
♣ 8 3

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

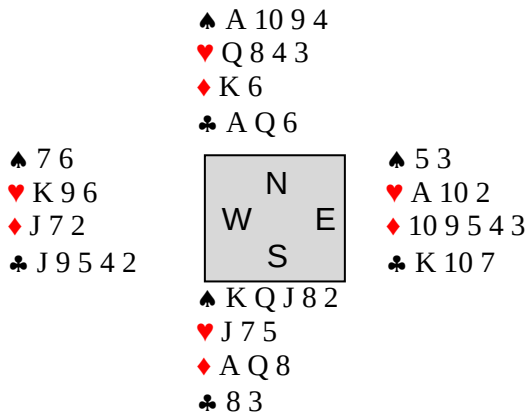
North responded with the Jacoby 2NT to show a strong raise in spades. (Most players treat this as game-forcing.) South indicated a minimum hand with no shortage and the bidding drew to a close.

How would you play the spade game when West leads the ♣4?

Bidding tip

It is easy enough to agree that you will play the Jacoby 2NT convention. Whether this will improve your bidding depends on the system of rebids that you use. Some books say: rebid at the three-level with a singleton, at the four-level with a second long suit. Under this scheme you make the same rebids on 12 points or 18 points and it may not be so easy for the two players to express how strong they are. An alternative is to reserve one rebid to show a minimum hand. The other distributional rebids show extra values.

SOLUTION 54



West leads the ♣4 against your spade game. How will you tackle the play?

The original declarer saw no reason to spurn the club finesse. Dummy’s queen lost to the king and East returned another club. Declarer eventually had to play on hearts himself and there was no way to avoid three losers in the suit. One down! Did you spot a better line of play?

The mistake came as early as Trick 1. You can make certain of the contract (unless trumps are 4-0) by rising with dummy’s ♣A. After drawing trumps, you play three rounds of diamonds, throwing a club from dummy. You then exit with a club to dummy’s bare queen. It makes no difference which defender wins with the ♣K. He will have to concede a ruff-and-sluff or open the heart suit, restricting your losses there to two tricks. Ten tricks either way.

Point to remember

Whenever you hold plenty of trumps in both hands (something like a 5-4 or 5-5 fit), think of elimination play. The idea is to remove one or more suits from the fray and then exit. The defender who wins this trick cannot play an eliminated suit without giving you a ruff-and-sluff. He may therefore have to make the first play on the key suit (here hearts) to your advantage.

PROBLEM 55

♠ 8 6 5
♥ A K J 5 4
♦ K Q
♣ A K J

♦J led

N
W E
S

♠ A K J
♥ Q 10 8 7 2
♦ A 8
♣ 9 7 5

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♠
Pass	6♥	All pass	

An unimpressive auction, let us agree, but there is nothing wrong with the final contract. How will you give yourself the best chance in the heart slam?

Bidding tip

It was a difficult hand to bid scientifically. North might have used the Jacoby 2NT, to show a strong heart raise. He would then have discovered that South was balanced with a minimum point-count. Once again, he would probably wheel out 4NT and end in 6♥.

SOLUTION 55

	♠ 8 6 5										
	♥ A K J 5 4										
	♦ K Q										
	♣ A K J										
♠ Q 3		♠ 10 9 7 4 2									
♥ 9 6 3		♥ —									
♦ J 10 9 4 2		♦ 7 6 5 3									
♣ 10 6 2		♣ Q 8 4 3									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K J										
	♥ Q J 8 7 2										
	♦ A 8										
	♣ 9 7 5										

West leads the ♦J against your 6♥. How will you tackle the play?

You have a potential loser in each black suit. One obvious line is to draw trumps and then finesse in turn against the two black queens. This will give you around a 74% chance. Can you see how to add a small extra chance?

You should draw trumps and play your second winner in the diamond suit. The idea then is to play the ace and king of one of the black suits. This gives you the extra chance of dropping a doubleton (or singleton) queen offside. It costs nothing if the finesse in that suit would have worked, because you can exit in the same suit. The defender who wins with the queen will be end-played, forced to lead into the other A-K-J tenace or to give you a ruff-and-sluff. If the wrong defender wins when you exit with a third round of the chosen black suit, you will have to rely on the other black-suit queen being onside.

One question remains. Should you play the top two cards in spades or in clubs? Since West began with three trumps to East's none, he is more likely to hold ♠Q-x than East is to hold ♣Q-x. You should therefore begin with the ace and king of spades. When the ♠Q falls on the second round, you will have deserved your 'Well played, partner!'

Point to remember

You will often encounter situations where you can say to yourself: 'If the finesse is right, there is no need to take it.' This may sound a bit weird. The meaning is that you can later end-play the defender who is left with the outstanding honor card.

PROBLEM 56

♠ 9 4 3 2
♥ K 7 4 2
♦ 4 3
♣ A K 2

♠J led

N
W E
S

♠ A K 8 7
♥ Q 8 3
♦ K Q
♣ Q J 7 6

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

West leads the ♠J against your spade game. You will need a 3-2 trump break and the fact that West has led a trump gives you hope that you will be lucky in that department. (A singleton trump is always a risky lead; with four trumps, you would retain their trick-taking potential by leading some other suit.)

A further loser awaits you in diamonds. How can you give yourself a chance of losing only one heart trick?

SOLUTION 56

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

West leads the ♠J against 4♠. How can you escape for just one heart loser?

If a defender holds a doubleton ♥A, you can lead a low card though his hand, ducking the next round to the bare ace. Can you see an extra chance?

After winning the trump lead, you should play the ♦K. East wins and exits with a diamond. You play your other high trump, followed by four rounds of clubs. East declines to ruff and these cards are left:

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

You exit with a trump to East's ♠Q and he has to lead a heart (or give you a ruff-and-sluff). If he chooses to play the ♥10 or ♥6, you will win with dummy's ♥K and lead towards the ♥Q for the contract.

Point to remember

It would have been fatal to draw a second round of trumps. When you subsequently played a diamond, East would win and play the ♠Q. It would no longer be possible to throw him on lead.

PROBLEM 57

♠ A 9 7
♥ A 7 6 4
♦ Q J 10 7 4
♣ 4

♠ 2 led

N

W S E

S

♠ 8 4
♥ Q J 10 9 3 2
♦ A K 5
♣ A J

West	North	East	South
Pass	6♥	3♠ All pass	4♥

West leads the ♠2 against your heart slam. How will you give the contract the best chance?

SOLUTION 57

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

West, whose partner opened with a pre-emptive 3♠, leads the ♠2 (an obvious singleton) against your small slam in hearts. How should you play the contract after winning with dummy's ♠A?

Normally with this heart suit, you would cross to the South hand and run the ♥Q, finessing against the ♥K. It would not be a good idea here, because if East held a singleton ♥K he would win and cash a spade trick. Since you can afford to lose a trump trick, you should make the safety play of cashing the ♥A at Trick 2. As it happens, the ♥K will fall singleton from the East hand. You can then draw the remaining trumps and play four rounds of diamonds to throw your spade loser, making an overtrick.

Suppose that West had started with K-x or K-x-x in the trump suit. You would still make the contract; only an overtrick would have been lost. You would concede a trick to West's ♥K and he would have no spade to play. When you regained the lead, you could discard your two black-suit losers on dummy's diamonds.

It was clear, both from East's pre-emptive opening and the lead of the ♠2, that West began with only one spade. By playing the ace of trumps, you ensured that you make the slam in two situations rather than one: when West holds the ♥K and when East holds a singleton ♥K.

Point to remember

You will encounter many deals where the best play in trumps is to play against the odds by trying to drop the missing honor. This will give you the best overall chance because if the trump honor does not fall, you can turn to a second chance – discarding one or more of your side-suit losers.

PROBLEM 58

♠ A K 7 3
♥ A Q J 7
♦ A
♣ J 8 7 5

♠ 10 led

N
W S E
S

♠ Q J 5 4
♥ K 4
♦ K J 10 9 5
♣ K 4

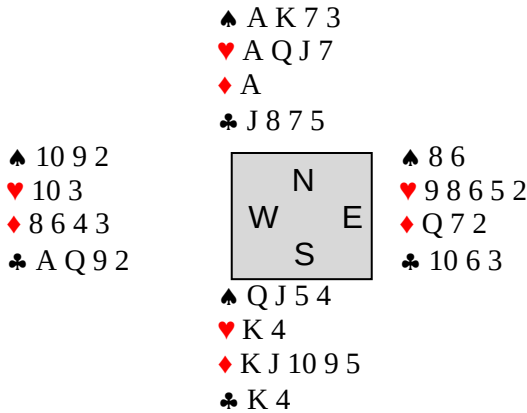
West	North	East	South
			1♦
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♣
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♣
Pass	6♠	All pass	

West leads the ♠10 against your small slam in spades. You win with the ♠A and draw a second round with the ♠K, all following. How will you play from this point?

Bidding tip

When South’s 5♣ response to Roman Key-card Blackwood showed no aces, North needed to find the ♠Q in order to venture a slam. Since 5♦ might have been an intended final resting place, he bid 5♥ to ask for the trump queen. Without the ♠Q, South would sign off in 5♠. With it, he bids the suit of his cheapest side-suit king (6♣ to show the ♣K) or jumps to 6♠. The auction was not entirely sound because North-South would have reached a slam when missing the two top clubs.

SOLUTION 58



How would you play 6♠ when West leads the ♠10?

You win with the ace and draw a second round with the king, everyone following. You would like to play four heart winners, throwing two clubs, and concede a diamond to the queen. Unfortunately, you need to draw the third trump before cashing the hearts. With only one (trump) entry left to the South hand, you will not be able to concede a diamond and then enjoy the established tricks in that suit. What is the best compromise available?

You should cash the ♦A and return to your hand with the trump queen. You then lead the ♦K, followed by the ♦J. You have no intention of running this card and you ruff with dummy's last trump when West follows low. This line gives you the extra chance of ♦Q-x-x falling. (A sound defender will not cover from ♦Q-x-x-x in the West seat, since he knows from the bidding that you have diamond length.). You don't want to rely on West holding the ♦Q when you can combine two chances in the minors.

When the cards lie as in the diagram, the ♦Q does fall from East. You play the hearts, discarding your two clubs, and make an overtrick. If the ♦Q had not fallen, you would discard your remaining *diamonds* on the hearts. You would then lead towards the ♣K, hoping that the ♣A was well placed.

Point to remember

It is nearly always better to combine two chances rather than rely on just one. Sometimes this involves taking the second-best chance in the first suit (diamonds here) and then falling back on your chance in the other suit (clubs). Taking the best chance in the first suit, a ruffing finesse in diamonds, would not allow you to combine it with leading towards the ♣K.

PROBLEM 59

♠ K J

♥ Q 7 6 3

♦ A 7 2

♣ A K 8 3

♦K led

N

W E

S

♠ Q 9 8 5 4 2

♥ A K J 5 2

♦ —

♣ 7 2

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥
Pass	6♥	All pass	

West leads the ♦K against your small slam in hearts. You win with dummy’s ♦A and discard a spade from your hand. You draw trumps in three rounds, West discarding two low diamonds. How will you continue?

Bidding tip

North’s 4♣ is a cue-bid that agrees hearts as trumps. If instead he wished to agree spades, he would bid a simple 3♠. It is vital that South knows which suit is agreed. Otherwise there may be ambiguity whether a bid in one of the majors is a sign-off or a further cue-bid.

SOLUTION 59

	♠ K J										
	♥ Q 7 6 3										
	♦ A 7 2										
	♣ A K 8 3										
♠ 10 7 6 3	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 9		♥ 10 8 4									
♦ K Q J 8 5		♦ 10 9 6 4 3									
♣ Q 10 4		♣ J 9 6 5									
	♠ Q 9 8 5 4 2										
	♥ A K J 5 2										
	♦ —										
	♣ 7 2										

How would you play 6♥ when West leads the ♦K to dummy's ace?

You discard a spade from your hand and draw trumps with the ace, king and queen, West discarding two low diamonds. Next you lead the ♠K to East's ace, ruffing the diamond return with the ♥5. These cards remain:

	♠ J										
	♥ 7										
	♦ 7										
	♣ A K 8 3										
♠ 10 7 6	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ —
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ —		♥ —									
♦ Q		♦ 10 9 6									
♣ Q 10 4		♣ J 9 6 5									
	♠ Q 9 8 5										
	♥ J										
	♦ —										
	♣ 7 2										

Suppose your next move is to play a spade to dummy's jack. Disaster! East shows out and your spade suit is dead. You have only one entry to your hand and the spades are not yet established.

There is an extra-chance play that will bring home the contract here. You lead the ♠Q from your hand, dropping dummy's ♠J. East shows out but you can then lead the ♠9 for a ruffing finesse against West's ♠10. When West produces the ten, you will ruff in the dummy and return to your hand with a ruff to enjoy the remaining spades. (If spades are 3-2, both defenders following to the ♠Q, you will set up the suit with a ruff. You can then return to your hand with a ruff to enjoy the remaining spades.)

PROBLEM 60

♠ K 7 5 4 2
♥ 9 6 5 3
♦ K 5
♣ K 8

♣6 led

N
W S E
S

♠ A 8
♥ A K
♦ A J 8 6 4 2
♣ Q 5 3

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

West leads the ♣6 against 3NT. You play the ♣K from dummy (correctly, since this is the only chance of that card scoring a trick). How will you continue when the ♣K wins, East following with the ♣4?

Bidding tip

Some players would have rebid 3♥ on the North cards, seeking a fit in one of the majors. It is scarcely worthwhile when you hold only four hearts to the 9. Even if there is a 5-3 spade fit, the deal may play satisfactorily in no-trumps. If South has a heart tenace, this will be protected from the opening lead, too.

SOLUTION 60

	♠ 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									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A 8										
	♥ A K										
	♦ A J 8 6 4 2										
	♣ Q 5 3										

West leads the ♣6 against 3NT and dummy's ♣K wins. What now?

You have seven top tricks, including the club trick already won. Where can you find two more? Prospects are not wonderful in spades. Even if the suit divides 3-3, East may win the third round and send a club through. If West began with ♠Q-x-x, he will have the chance to unblock his ♠Q under your ♠A, so that his partner can win the third round of the suit.

The diamond suit looks much more promising. A 3-2 break will give you at least three extra tricks, provided you can establish the long cards without allowing East to win the lead.

The original declarer began by playing the ♦K, raising an eyebrow when the ♦Q dropped from West. When he led a second round, East inserted the ♦9, preventing declarer from finessing the ♦8. Declarer won with the ♦J and the contract could no longer be made.

Declarer had missed an extra chance. At Trick 2, you should cross to your hand in one of the major suits. You then lead a low diamond from your hand. When the ♦Q appears from West, you duck! The remainder of the diamond suit is good and West cannot damage you in clubs from his side of the table. You will score an overtrick.

Point to remember

The extra-chance play here is an example of Avoidance Play. Suppose you were trying to develop ♦A-K-8-7-2 in the dummy opposite ♦6-5-3 in your hand and could not allow East to gain the lead. You would lead twice towards the dummy, planning to duck (into the safe hand) if the ♦Q appeared from West. In this way you would avoid going down when West had started with ♦Q-x. If instead you played the top honors from dummy, East would win the third round of diamonds.

Chapter 7

Making life awkward

In this chapter we will see some deals where you can make life difficult for the defenders. Perhaps you will spot a deceptive play that may lure a defender down the wrong path. Maybe you can interfere with the defenders' communications. Whatever your opponents want to do during a hand, you will try to prevent it from happening.

You get the general idea, then. You must try to be the type of declarer that all defenders hate playing against. Good luck!

PROBLEM 61

♠Q led

♠ 8 3

♥ 10 4

♦ 10 7 5 3

♣ K J 9 6 2

N
E

W
S

♠ A 10

♥ K Q J 9 6 2

♦ K 2

♣ A Q 5

West	North	East	South
1 ♠	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	3 ♥
Pass	4 ♥	All pass	

Sitting South, you show a very strong hand by doubling and then jumping to 3♥. Since North has a little something, he raises to game (a close decision and some players would have passed on those cards).

How will you play the heart game when West leads the spade queen?

SOLUTION 61

♠ 8 3
♥ 10 4
♦ 10 7 5 3
♣ K J 9 6 2

♠ Q J 9 7 5
♥ A 5
♦ A Q J 4
♣ 8 3

♠ K 6 4 2
♥ 8 7 3
♦ 9 8 6
♣ 10 7 4

♠ A 10
♥ K Q J 9 6 2
♦ K 2
♣ A Q 5

W N E S

West opens 1♠ and, sitting South, you arrive in 4♥. How will you play the heart game when West leads the ♠Q?

Suppose you win immediately with the ♠A. When you play on trumps and West wins with the ace, he will be able to cross to his partner's ♠K. East can then play a diamond through your king to put the game one down.

Only 17 points are missing and East is known from the opening lead to hold the ♠K. West will hold most of the remaining 14 points for his opening bid and will surely hold the ♦A over your ♦K.

Since East is the danger hand (who can attack diamonds profitably), you must aim to keep him off lead. You can do this by ducking the ♠Q at Trick 1. This breaks the defenders' communications and West will have no route to his partner's hand when he wins with the trump ace. In good time you will be able to ditch your diamonds on dummy's club suit. Indeed, West will have to cash the ♦A to prevent you from making an overtrick.

You may wonder what would happen if East played the ♠K on his partner's queen at Trick 1. You would win with the ace and your ♠10 would then prevent West from crossing in spades.

Point to remember

The idea of ducking the opening lead is familiar when playing in no-trumps. It can be equally effective in a suit contract. The aim is the same – you want to break the defenders' communications.

Suppose East held ♠K-10-6-4. Placing his partner with the ♠Q-J, he would indeed overtake the ♠Q with the ♠K. When you won with the ♠A and played a trump, West could win and underlead his ♠J to reach East's ♠10. A diamond switch would beat the contract.

PROBLEM 62

♠ K 8

♥ Q J 10 8

♦ Q 10 3

♣ Q 10 9 3

♣K led

N

W E

S

♠ Q 10 5 2

♥ A K 9 3 2

♦ A 6 5

♣ J

West	North	East	South
			1♥
2♣	3♣	Pass	4♥
All pass			

North’s 3♣ shows a sound high-card raise to at least 3♥. You bid the heart game and West leads the ♣K, East following with the ♣2. West then switches to the ♦9.

How would you play the contract after this start?

Bidding tip

When your partner’s opening bid is overcalled, you should make use of bids in the overcaller’s suit. On this deal a direct raise to 3♥ would have been pre-emptive. It would show 4-card heart support, a fairly weak hand and a ruffing value. With a full 10 points, a cue-bid is appropriate.

SOLUTION 62

♠ K 8
 ♥ Q J 10 8
 ♦ Q 10 3
 ♣ Q 10 9 3

♠ A 9 7
 ♥ 6
 ♦ 9 8 7 2
 ♣ A K 6 5 4

♠ J 6 4 3
 ♥ 7 5 4
 ♦ K J 4
 ♣ 8 7 2

♠ Q 10 5 2
 ♥ A K 9 3 2
 ♦ A 6 5
 ♣ J

N
 W E
 S

West leads the ♣K against your heart game, drawing the ♣2 and ♣J from the closed hands. Concluding that you hold a singleton club, he switches to the ♦9.

This is the best defense (once West has missed the deadly diamond lead). On a passive trump switch, for example, you would be able to run the ♣Q, throwing a diamond. You could subsequently throw a spade and a diamond on the established clubs, losing just two clubs and one spade. How will you play from this point?

You cover with dummy's $\spadesuit 10$ and allow East's $\spadesuit J$ to win the trick. East, who cannot safely continue diamonds, switches to a trump. You win with the king and play a spade to the king, which wins. You next play a spade to the 10 and ace. After a second diamond to the queen, king and ace, you cross to the $\heartsuit Q$, ruff a club and cash the $\spadesuit Q$, throwing dummy's last diamond. You can then cross-ruff the remaining tricks to make the game.

The deal comes from a duplicate pairs event and most declarers made the heart game, two of them with an overtrick. No doubt the defense was not so testing at the other tables!

Point to remember

On this deal you needed to avoid losing two diamond tricks. The ♠9 switch strongly suggested that East held both the ♠K and the ♠J. Winning the first round of diamonds with the ♠A would have resulted in defeat. You needed to cover with the ♠10 and duck East's ♠J, preventing the defenders from clearing their second diamond trick.

PROBLEM 63

♥K led

♠ A 7 5

♥ 9 5 2

♦ A J 9 5

♣ K 8 5

W

N

E

S

♠ K 9 8 6 4

♥ A 6 3

♦ Q 10 2

♣ A 4

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

With a stopper in each suit, South might have raised 1NT to 3NT. He decided to use a check-back bid of 2♣ to look for a 5-3 spade fit and arrived in 4♠. How will you play this contract when West leads the ♥K?

SOLUTION 63

♠ A 7 5
♥ 9 5 2
♦ A J 9 5
♣ K 8 5

♠ 10 2
♥ K Q J 8 4
♦ 7 6
♣ Q 10 7 2

♠ Q J 3
♥ 10 7
♦ K 8 4 3
♣ J 9 6 3

♠ K 9 8 6 4
♥ A 6 3
♦ Q 10 2
♣ A 4

How will you play the spade game when West leads the ♥K?

Suppose you win with the first trick with the ace. You draw two rounds of trumps with the ace and king, pleased to see the suit divide 3-2. Just one more lucky break is needed, a successful diamond finesse.

When you run the $\heartsuit Q$, your luck changes. East wins with the $\heartsuit K$, cashes the $\spadesuit Q$ and returns a heart. Two heart tricks bring the defenders' total to four and you are one down.

To give yourself an extra chance you should hold up the ♥A for one round, winning the heart continuation. Since the hearts started 5-2, East now has no hearts left. As before, you draw two rounds of trumps and run the ♦Q. East wins but he has no heart to return. When you regain the lead you will play your remaining diamonds, throwing the heart loser.

You see the difference? By ducking a round of hearts, you were able to break communication between the two defenders. If hearts were 4-3, the plan would fail but at least you would have given yourself the best chance. What if West unexpectedly held six hearts and East was able to ruff the second round of hearts. It would cost you nothing, since he would be ruffing a loser and there would be no re-entry to the West hand for a second ruff. Indeed, if East held three trumps his ruff would be taken with a natural trump trick.

Point to remember

This was another example of holding up an ace in a suit contract. It is often a good idea when you hold A-x-x opposite x-x-x, since it kills defensive communications when the suit breaks 5-2.

When West leads the ♥K, indicating a sequence, it is quite likely that he holds five hearts. Suppose his heart suit is headed by the K-Q-J or K-Q-10. If the remaining four spot cards happen to divide 2-2, West will hold five hearts.

PROBLEM 64

♠ Q 5

♥ 9 5

♦ K J 9 6 2

♣ Q 10 9 2

♣5 led

N

W E

S

♠ A J 3

♥ A K J 4

♦ A Q 10 7 5

♣ 4

West	North	East	South
			1♦
Pass	3♦	Pass	6♦
All pass			

Sitting South, you give up any chance of winning a bidding prize with your immediate leap to 6♦. Never mind! Perhaps you can put a fat entry into the plus column of your score-card by spotting the best chance to make the slam.

How will you tackle it when West leads the ♣5? You play the ♣9 from dummy and East wins with the ♣A, returning the ♣3. Over to you!

Bidding tip

There are two ways to bid. Some players conduct the longest possible auction, aiming to find out as much as possible about partner's hand. There is nothing wrong with this but it may assist the defenders later on. The other method, often favoured by rubber bridge and Chicago players, is to leap to the most likely contract, giving away as little information as possible.

I won't recommend one style over the other. You have probably already made up your mind on the matter!

SOLUTION 64

♠ Q 5
♥ 9 5
♦ K J 9 6 2
♣ Q 10 9 2

♠ 9 6 4
♥ Q 7 6 3
♦ 8 3
♣ K J 6 5

♠ K 10 8 7 2
♥ 10 8 2
♦ 4
♣ A 8 7 3

♠ A J 3
♥ A K J 4
♦ A Q 10 7 5
♣ 4

You blast your way into the diamond small slam and West leads the ♣5 to East's ♣A. How will you play the contract when East returns the ♣3?

You ruff the club return and cross to dummy with a trump, everyone following. What now? If East holds the ♠K, a successful spade finesse will give you the contract. You would then draw the last trump and ruff your three remaining major-suit losers in the dummy. If instead East holds the ♥Q, you will fare better by finessing in hearts. You could then throw a spade from dummy on the third round of hearts, again ruffing your three remaining losers in the dummy. Which major-suit finesse should you take?

Against 95% of the world's defenders there is no need to guess! Lead the ♠Q from dummy at Trick 4. If East has the ♠K he is very likely to cover. If he fails to cover, the likelihood is that West holds the ♠K. You will rise with the ♠A, cross to dummy with another trump and take the heart finesse instead. You get the best of both worlds.

(If you judge East to be a megastar capable of withholding the ♠K, an alternative line is to play the ♥A-K and ruff a heart. This allows you to combine the chance of dropping the ♥Q in two or three rounds with that of a successful spade finesse.)

Point to remember

Most defenders feel it their civic duty to ‘cover an honor with an honor’. You can use this to your advantage as declarer. Here you test the spade situation by leading the ♠Q. If East follows blithely with a low card there are two possibilities. First, he doesn’t hold the ♠K. Second, he is an annoyingly expert defender who holds the ♠K but has managed to read the situation. You should rise with the ♠A and take the heart finesse instead.

PROBLEM 65

♠ 9 8 5 3
♥ A 2
♦ A 7 6 4
♣ A J 3

♦Q led

N
W E
S

♠ K Q J 10 6 2
♥ K 6
♦ 9 5 3
♣ Q 8

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

North’s Jacoby 2NT shows at least a game-raise in spades. South signs off in 4♠ with his minimum hand and West leads the ♦Q. How will you play the contract?

Bidding tip

The efficiency (or otherwise) of the Jacoby 2NT convention lies in the chosen set of rebids by the opener. Give ‘Jacoby 2NT’ to your favourite internet search engine and you will find several good versions.

SOLUTION 65

♠ 7
♥ J 9 8 5 3
♦ Q J 10 8
♣ 7 5 4

♠ 9 8 5 3
♥ A 2
♦ A 7 6 4
♣ A J 3

♠ A 4
♥ Q 10 7 4
♦ K 2
♣ K 10 9 6 2

♠ K Q J 10 6 2
♥ K 6
♦ 9 5 3
♣ Q 8

W N E S

How would you play the spade game when West leads the $\spadesuit Q$?

Suppose you win immediately with the ♦A. A strong defender, sitting East, will unblock his ♦K. When he wins with the ♠A, he will return his remaining diamond, allowing West to score two tricks in the suit. A subsequent club finesse fails and you will be one down.

Let's go back to Trick 1 and see what happens if you duck the first round of diamonds, aiming to break the communications between the two defenders. Whether or not East overtakes with the ♦K, you will win the second round of diamonds. When you play on trumps, you are pleased to see that East wins the trick. With no diamond to play, he will probably return a heart. You win, draw trumps, and run the ♣Q into the safe hand. The finesse loses but you will make the contract. East still can't find another diamond in his hand and you will throw your last diamond on the third round of clubs. Even if West has led from ♦Q-J-10-x-x and East has a singleton ♦K, it will not assist your prospects to rise with the ♦A immediately.

Point to remember

The idea of holding up an ace is familiar in no-trump contracts. It can be equally effective in a suit contract, as we have seen. The idea is the same – to break communications between the two defenders.

PROBLEM 66

♠ 9 7 6 3 2

♥ 9 8 5 3

♦ 10 3

♣ A Q

♠ Q led

W

N

E

S

♠ —

♥ J

♦ A K 9 8 6 5 4 2

♣ K 7 4 3

West	North	East	South
All pass		1♠	5♦

You venture a 5♦ overcall, which is passed out, and dummy goes down with two precious honors in the club suit. Have you missed a slam?

This is not the time to worry about the bidding. You ruff the spade lead and play the ♦A, East discarding a spade. West has a trump trick, so you were right to stop short of a slam. How will you give the diamond game the very best chance?

Point to remember

Many players allow themselves to be distracted when they miss the best spot in the auction. Instead of concentrating on the actual contract, they waste part of their brain power on trying to decide where the bidding went wrong. It is not a winning strategy! You can discuss the bidding in the bar afterwards. Once the opening lead is made and dummy goes down, you must devote your full concentration to the card-play.

SOLUTION 66

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

♠ 9 7 6 3 2
 ♥ 9 8 5 3
 ♦ 10 3
 ♣ A Q

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

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

W N E S

You bid 5♦ over East's 1♠ and there is no further bidding. West leads the ♠Q and you ruff in your hand. When you lay down the ♦A, East discards a spade. How will you continue?

You are booked to lose one heart and one trump trick. You must therefore make plans for your fourth club. The idea is to ruff a club in dummy, not worrying if West consumes his natural trump trick by ruffing in front of the dummy. Can you see any risk involved in this line of play?

Let's see how the original declarer went down. He played dummy's two club honors and returned to his hand with a spade ruff. When he led the ♣7, things turned sour in a big way. West ruffed with the ♦J, ahead of the dummy, and led a heart to East's ace. A further round of clubs promoted the bare ♦Q and the game was one down.

There was no hurry to draw trumps or to take a club ruff. Declarer should instead have led the ♥J at Trick 2, breaking the link between the defenders. He could then win the return, draw one round of trumps and go for his club ruff. It would make no difference then if West ruffed in with the ♦J. With no entry to the East hand to achieve a trump promotion, he would not make the ♦Q in addition. Declarer would win any return, draw the last trump and claim the remaining tricks.

Point to remember

The play of leading the ♥J cuts the link between the defenders' hands. The technique was prettily named as the Scissors Coup by the maestro, Terence Reese.

PROBLEM 67

♠ A 5
♥ A 7 4
♦ A Q 9 8 6
♣ 6 3 2

♠ K led

N
W E
S

♠ 8 6
♥ K J 10 8 6 3
♦ K J 2
♣ K 7

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♥
2♣	Dble	Pass	4♥
All pass			

North makes a Support Double to show 3-card heart support. How will you play the resultant contract of 4♥ when West leads the ♠K?

Bidding tip

The classical meaning of a double by North in this auction is that it is for penalties. An alternative is for a double to mean ‘I have extra values but no good bid to make’. In other words, it is for take-out. Yet a third meaning is very popular in the tournament world. When the opener might have made a single raise of responder’s suit, but chooses instead to double, he shows a hand with 3-card support for responder’s suit. This is known as a Support Double. The hand may be of any strength. This will be clarified on the next round.

SOLUTION 67

♠ A 5
 ♥ A 7 4
 ♦ A Q 9 8 6
 ♣ 6 3 2

♠ K Q 4
 ♥ 9
 ♦ 7 5 3
 ♣ A Q J 10 8 4

♠ 8 6
 ♥ K J 10 8 6 3
 ♦ K J 2
 ♣ K 7

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

N
 W E
 S

West, who overcalled in clubs, leads the ♠K against your heart game. How will you play the contract for maximum safety?

The contract is a good one. It can go down only if you lose a spade, a trump and two club tricks. To avoid the loss of two clubs, you must prevent East from winning the lead before you can take discards on dummy's diamond suit.

The first key move is to duck the ♠K lead. You can afford to lose a spade trick, provided it is lost to the safe hand (West). You win the spade continuation with dummy's ace and turn your mind to drawing trumps. Since you have no wish for East to gain the lead, you should cash the ♥A and finesse the ♥J in the South hand. As it happens, the finesse succeeds and you make twelve tricks. Even if the finesse had lost to a doubleton ♥Q, the contract would still have been guaranteed. With West on lead, the defenders could take only one trick from the club suit. On any other return you would discard both your club losers on dummy's diamond suit.

Point to remember

The deal contained two examples of Avoidance Play. Suppose you had won the opening lead of the ♠K. If a subsequent trump finesse lost to a doubleton ♥Q with West, he would have the chance to lead the ♠4 to his partner's hand for a club switch. The second use of the technique was to finesse in trumps. You could afford to lose a trump trick, provided it was lost to the safe (West) hand.

PROBLEM 68

♠ 3
♥ A 5 4
♦ A 7 6
♣ A K J 6 4 2

♠ 6 led

N
W E
S

♠ Q J 8 4
♥ K 8 7 3
♦ K 2
♣ 10 9 3

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♥
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
All pass			

West leads the ♠6 against 3NT, East winning with the ♠K. How will you play the contract when East returns the ♠9?

Bidding tip

Bidding continuations after 1♣ – 1♥ – 3♣ are rarely discussed. Although 3♣ is non-forcing, a subsequent rebid of 3♥ by responder is forcing. This is the way to seek 3-card support for a 5-card heart suit. What would you understand by a rebid of 3♠?

Such a rebid cannot be seeking a 4-4 spade fit, since the opener’s 3♣ bid denied four spades. Nor should the responder bid it merely because he is 4-5 in the major suits and is seeking a 5-3 heart fit. On such a hand he can rebid 3♥. The meaning should be that he has a good spade stopper but no stopper in diamonds. He is hoping that the opener has a diamond stopper and can say 3NT.

SOLUTION 68

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

♠ 3
 ♥ A 5 4
 ♦ A 7 6
 ♣ A K J 6 4 2

♠ K 9 5
 ♥ J 10 6 2
 ♦ Q 9 4
 ♣ Q 7 5

♠ Q J 8 4
 ♥ K 8 7 3
 ♦ K 2
 ♣ 10 9 3

N
 W S E

West leads the ♠6 against 3NT and East wins with the ♠K. How will you play the contract when East returns the ♠9?

The original declarer made a quick job of going down. He covered with the ♠J and West followed with the ♠2, retaining his ♠A-10 over South's ♠Q-8. When declarer played on clubs, he discovered that East held a stopper in the suit. He could not be denied the lead with his ♣Q and a third round of spades then put the contract one down.

Declarer's mistake came at Trick 2. He should have contributed the ♠8 to the second round of spades. After his ♠9 wins, East is welcome to continue with the ♠5. Whether or not West captures the third round, the link between the defenders will be broken. Declarer can give up a club to East, who will have no spade to play.

Point to remember

Suppose you follow the recommended line and West wins the third round of spades with the ace, proceeding to clear the suit. Now West is the danger hand and you should play clubs accordingly. After a club to the ace, you return to your hand in a red suit and run the ♣10 into the safe (East) hand. Even if you lose a trick to the doubleton ♣Q with East, you will still make your game.

PROBLEM 69

♠ 7 4 2

♥ 9 8

♦ A Q J 10 7 3

♣ K 5

♠ K led

N

W E

S

♠ A J 6

♥ A 6

♦ 6 5 4 2

♣ A Q J 7

West	North	East	South
Pass	3NT	All pass	1NT

Game in diamonds might have been a better prospect but... too late! You are in 3NT. How will you play the contract when West leads the ♠K?

Bidding tip

How could North have shown his diamonds and then invited partner to choose between 3NT and the diamond game? One way is to play **four-suit transfers**. Nearly everyone plays 2♦ and 2♥ as transfers for the major suits. You can also play 2♠ and 2NT as transfers for clubs and diamonds, respectively. Since the opener then has two bids available within the safety-level of three of the minor, he can use one of them to show good support, the other to deny it. Whichever rebid he makes, the responder will have the option to continue with 3NT, offering a choice of games.

SOLUTION 69

	♠ 7 4 2										
	♥ 9 8										
	♦ A Q J 10 7 3										
	♣ K 5										
♠ K Q 10 9 3		♠ 8 5									
♥ J 10 4		♥ K Q 7 5 3 2									
♦ 9		♦ K 8									
♣ 10 8 4 3		♣ 9 6 2									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A J 6										
	♥ A 6										
	♦ 6 5 4 2										
	♣ A Q J 7										

West leads the ♠K against 3NT. How can you give yourself the best chance?

The deal arose in a teams-of-four match, with both South players attempting 3NT. The first declarer won the ♠K lead with the ♠A, retaining a spade stopper against West. He then made the safety play of leading a diamond to the ace, guarding against a singleton ♦K with East. (He didn't mind losing a diamond trick to West because the spades would still be protected.) Unfortunately for him, it was East who won the next round of diamonds. Back came a spade and the contract was one down.

The second declarer feigned weakness in spades by following with the ♠6 at Trick 1. Did West fall for it, continuing with a second spade into South's tenace? He did not! He switched smartly to the ♥J, setting up that suit for the defenders. Declarer had little option but to take a diamond finesse and he went three down.

A better deceptive play is to follow with the ♠J at Trick 1. If West reads you for ♠A-J doubleton, he will continue with a second spade, exhausting East's holding in the suit. You will win the second round of spades and finesse diamonds into the safe hand, making the contract. (If East has another spade, the suit will break 4-3 and pose no problem.)

Point to remember

How would top-class defenders survive against this deceptive play? A clever method of opening leads is available. The lead of a king at no-trumps asks partner to unblock any honor, otherwise give a count signal. Here, East's ♠8 count signal would unmask the deception, telling partner that South could not possibly hold ♠A-J doubleton.

PROBLEM 70

♠ K 8 5
♥ A 7 6 4 2
♦ 9 5
♣ K 8 4

♠ 10 led

N
W E
S

♠ 6
♥ K 8 5 3
♦ A 2
♣ A Q J 9 5 2

West	North	East	South
		4♠	5♣

All pass

This deal is from the Cavendish pairs in the USA and neither side is vulnerable. The main point of interest in the bidding is North’s action. Should he raise to 6♣, do you think?

It is possible that partner has a huge hand and that twelve tricks will make. Against that, the 5♣ overcall may contain an element of sacrifice - or be a two-way shot. Partner may well be hoping for a card or two in the dummy and the ♠K does not figure to be very valuable. North judged well to pass.

Take the South cards now. How would you play the club game when West leads the ♠10?

Bidding tip

When the opponents open with a high pre-emptive bid and your partner competes at the cheapest level, you should be wary about raising. Say he bids 4♠ over 4♥. Such a bid may be made on a wide variety of hands, including a relatively modest one with a long spade suit. Even if you hold two aces, it may well be right to pass.

The situation is different if partner jumps to 4♠ over 3♥. This guarantees a great hand and with two aces you might well think of a small slam.

SOLUTION 70

♠ K 8 5
♥ A 7 6 4 2
♦ 9 5
♣ K 8 4

♠ 10
♥ Q 10 9
♦ K Q J 7 6 4
♣ 10 7 3

♠ A Q J 9 7 4 3 2
♥ J
♦ 10 8 3
♣ 6

♠ 6
♥ K 8 5 3
♦ A 2
♣ A Q J 9 5 2

You bid 5♣ over East's opening 4♠ and there is no further bidding. How would you play the club game when West leads the ♠10?

Suppose you play low from dummy, which would normally be the right play. Whether or not East overtakes, you are almost certain to get a diamond switch at Trick 2. You will eventually have to give up a heart, to set up that suit, and the defenders will cash a diamond trick to beat the contract.

When the USA star, Paul Soloway, played the deal, he played dummy's ♠K at Trick 1. East won with the ♠A and now had an attractive ♠Q return, aiming for a trump promotion. Soloway ruffed high, drew trumps and set up the hearts. Away went the diamond loser and the game was made.

This was thoughtful play by Soloway. Just the sort of deceptive play that I like – very simple, but one that few players would consider. By covering with the ♠K he also removed the possibility that West would be left on lead and might then switch to a diamond. However, it was poor defense by East. Why on earth did he think declarer had played dummy's ♠K? There could be no direct benefit and East should have seen through the deception. A diamond switch was clearly indicated.

Point to remember

When you fear a particular switch from the opponents, you can sometimes deliberately leave them with a losing option. For example, instead of eliminating a suit (or drawing all the trumps), you can leave the defenders a safe exit in one of those suits.

Chapter 8

No-trump Slams

A contract that has always fascinated me is 6NT. I once wrote a 190-page book, ‘Somehow We Landed in 6NT’, in which every contract was 6NT! It was a mixture of real-life deals featuring famous declarers, and humorous fictional deals involving the monks of St Titus, the nuns of St Hilda’s, the Rabbi, the Headmaster and boys of Cholmeley School, Robin Hood, the Sheriff and a host of other characters from my story writing over 35 years.

PROBLEM 71

♠ 8 7 5

♥ K J 9 4 3 2

♦ —

♣ Q 6 4 2

♠Q led

N

W E

S

♠ A K 9

♥ A 8

♦ A K Q 10 8 2

♣ A K

West	North	East	South
			2♣
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	6NT
All pass			

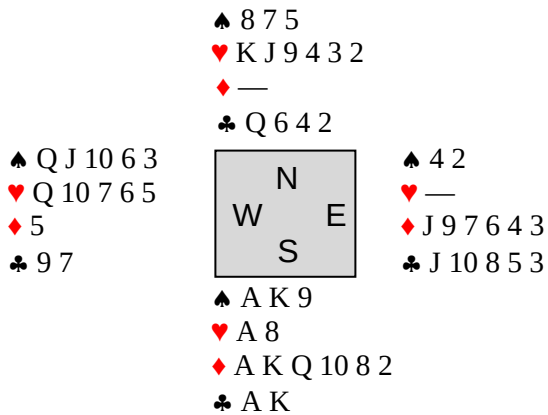
6♥ or 6♦ would be at the mercy of a hostile break in the chosen trump suit. Declarer might make 6NT even when one of the red suits broke poorly.

West led the ♠Q and declarer won with the ace. When two top diamonds were played, West threw a spade on the second round. The ♥A brought similarly bad news, East throwing a club. How will you continue?

Point to remember

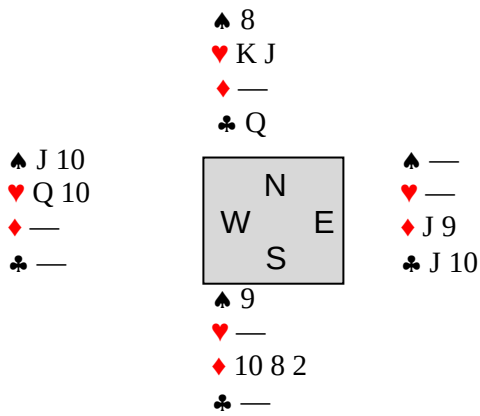
It’s often right to play a small slam in no-trumps, rather than a suit. You may then give yourself a chance when there is a bad break in the suit that you might otherwise have chosen as trumps.

SOLUTION 71



West leads the ♠Q against 6NT and you win with the ace. Two top diamonds bring a spade discard from West. When you play the ♥A, East shows out on the first round. How will you attempt to survive these breaks?

You should play all the winners in the South hand and then cross to dummy with a finesse of the ♥9. You will reach this position:



When you cash the ♣Q, West has no good discard. If he releases a spade, you will throw him in with a spade, forcing him to play a heart into dummy's tenace. If instead he throws a heart, dummy's ♥K-J will be good.

Point to remember

The play is known as a *strip squeeze*. West is stripped of a winner (his second spade), leaving him ready for a throw-in.

PROBLEM 72

♠ K 9 4
♥ J 6 2
♦ A Q 7
♣ A Q J 7

♠Q led

N
W E
S

♠ A 7 2
♥ A 5
♦ K J 5
♣ K 10 8 5 4

West	North	East	South
1 ♠ Pass	Dble 6NT	Pass All pass	1 ♣ 1NT

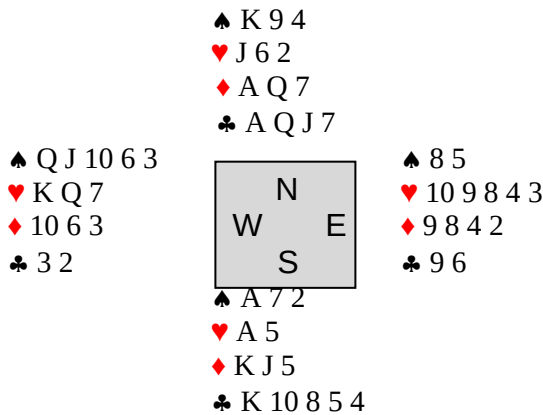
North's double was negative (for take-out). The partnership was playing the weak 1NT, so South's 1NT rebid showed 15-17 points. North's leap to 6NT was somewhat of an overbid, with only 17 points and such a flat hand. He might instead have suggested a slam with a limit raise to 4NT.

How would you play 6NT when West leads the ♠Q?

Bidding tip

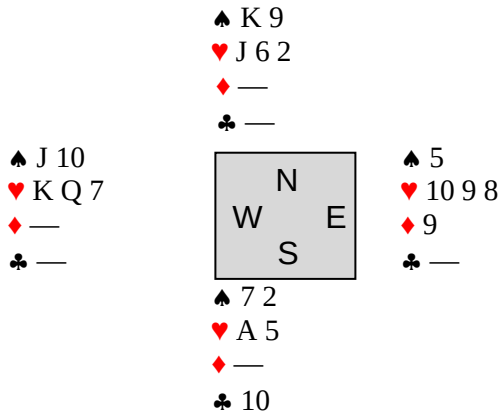
South's 1♣ opening had promised at least four clubs and, at his first turn, North might have bid 2♠ to show a strong raise in clubs. Since he had such a flat hand, he thought it a better idea to start with a negative double. This way he would find out more about the type of hand that his partner held.

SOLUTION 72



West leads the ♠Q against 6NT. There are eleven top tricks and the only real chance of a twelfth is to squeeze West in the majors. In other words, you will play your winners in the minors, forcing West to weaken his guard in one of the majors.

Normally, it would aid your prospects to duck a trick at an early stage, to tighten the end position. You cannot duck a heart here because West would then return another spade, leaving you with no entry to dummy in the squeeze ending. Instead you must win with the ♠A and run your minor-suit winners. You arrive at this end position:



West is doomed when you lead the ♣10. If he throws a spade, you will throw dummy's ♥2 and score the ♠K-9. If instead he throws a heart, you will discard the ♠9 and play ace and another heart to set up dummy's ♥J.

PROBLEM 73

♠ A 5 3
♥ A Q 3
♦ 8 7 6 2
♣ A 5 3

♣J led

N
W E
S

♠ K Q 7
♥ K J 6 4
♦ A Q
♣ K Q 8 6

West	North	East	South
Pass	6NT	All pass	2NT

How will you play 6NT when West leads the ♣J?

Bidding tip

When both hands are balanced, you need 33 points or more to bid 6NT. With 4-3-3-3 shape and no points in his 4-card suit, North was glad that the combined point-count would be at least 34 on this occasion.

SOLUTION 73

	♠ A 5 3										
	♥ A Q 3										
	♦ 8 7 6 2										
	♣ A 5 3										
♠ 8 2	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 10 9 6 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 10 9		♥ 8 7 5 2									
♦ K J 4 3		♦ 10 9 5									
♣ J 10 9 7 2		♣ 4									
	♠ K Q 7										
	♥ K J 6 4										
	♦ A Q										
	♣ K Q 8 6										

West leads the ♣J against 6NT. You win in your hand and play four rounds of hearts, West discarding a diamond and a club. Your eyes light up at the club discard, but East shows out when you cross to the ♣A. What now?

It may seem that you need to take the diamond finesse but there is a chance to end-play West. You play three rounds of spades, West keeping his club guard and throwing a second small diamond. These cards remain:

♠ —	♠ —	♠ —	♠ J 10									
♥ —	♥ —	♥ —	♥ —									
♦ K J	♦ 8 7 6	♦ —	♦ 10 9									
♣ 10 9	♣ 5	♣ —	♣ —									
	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S			
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ —											
	♥ —											
	♦ A Q											
	♣ Q 8											

You cross to the ♣Q and throw West on lead with your last club. He then has to return a diamond into your ♦A-Q.

Point to remember

West does better to keep the ♣10-9-7, baring the ♦K. You would then have to guess whether to finesse East for the ♦K, or to attempt to drop the king from the West hand. Since West started with four diamonds to East's three, he is favourite to hold the ♦K.

PROBLEM 74

♠ A K J 10 3
♥ A 8 2
♦ 5
♣ A K 6 5

♣Q led

N
W E
S

♠ Q 2
♥ K J 6 4
♦ A Q 10 9 8 6
♣ 2

West	North	East	South
			1♦
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
Pass	4NT	Pass	6NT
All pass			

How would you play 6NT when West leads the ♣Q?

Bidding tip

When the bidding reaches 3NT and the next player then bids 4NT, this is a limit bid that invites a slam. It is not Blackwood. On the deal above, South thought that his chunky diamond suit entitled him to accept the invitation.

SOLUTION 74

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

How would you play 6NT when West leads the ♣Q?

You win with dummy's ace and see that you have ten top tricks. If East holds ♥Q-x-x, you can score two extra heart tricks to bring the total to twelve. The best move at Trick 2 is to play a diamond to the queen.

As the cards lie, the finesse wins. With eleven tricks in the bag, you now need only three tricks from the heart suit. What safety play will give you the best chance of this? You should cash the ♥K and lead low to the ♥A. This will pick up a doubleton ♥Q with West, while allowing you to lead towards the ♥J on the third round if the queen does not drop. You will still make the three heart tricks you need if East holds the ♥Q or hearts break 3-3. Here another chance materializes. The ♥10-9 fall, so you can run the ♥8 to West's queen, establishing your jack.

What would happen if the diamond finesse had lost to West's king? You would then need to make four heart tricks. Rather than rely on the one chance of ♥Q-x-x with East, you should cash dummy's winners in the black suits. This would then squeeze East in hearts and diamonds if he held the ♦J alongside four hearts to the queen.

Point to remember

Sometimes you must test one suit (diamonds here) to decide whether you can afford a safety play in another suit (hearts here). The best play in hearts depends on how many tricks you need from the suit. You do not know that until you have seen whether the finesse of the ♦Q wins.

PROBLEM 75

♠ 5
♥ 7 4
♦ A K Q 6
♣ K Q 10 9 7 4

♠K led

N
W E
S

♠ A J 10 4
♥ A Q J 6
♦ 8 4 2
♣ A 3

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

North left his diamonds unmentioned, preferring to show a strong hand with long clubs. When South cue-bid a heart control, North bid Blackwood and leapt to 6NT. How would you play this contract when West leads the ♠K?

Bidding tip

When partner opens 1NT, you need some method of showing slam-try values and a trump suit of at least six cards. A simple and very effective method is to use a jump to the three-level to show this hand type.

SOLUTION 75

	♠ 5										
	♥ 7 4										
	♦ A K Q 6										
	♣ K Q 10 9 7 4										
♠ K Q 9 8 7		♠ 6 3 2									
♥ 9 8 3 2		♥ K 10 5									
♦ 10 7 3		♦ J 9 5									
♣ 2		♣ J 8 6 5									
	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A J 10 4										
	♥ A Q J 6										
	♦ 8 4 2										
	♣ A 3										

How would you play 6NT when West leads the ♠K?

The original declarer assumed that the club suit would run. In that case he had eleven easy tricks and one more from the spade suit would bring the total to twelve. After winning the spade lead with the ♠A, he led the ♠J, throwing a heart from dummy. West won and returned another spade, declarer throwing a diamond from dummy.

When the club suit misbehaved, there was no way to recover. Declarer had already discarded two potentially useful red-suit cards from the dummy. The best he could do was to go one down by giving East a club trick.

A better line is to test the clubs first, playing the king and the ace. When you play the ♠J next, you are much better placed. You know you can afford to throw two clubs from the dummy, retaining dummy's red-suit cards. Diamonds break 3-3 and the ♥K is onside! You can therefore score three heart tricks and four diamond tricks. This bumps your total to twelve tricks, overcoming the unlucky break in the club suit.

Point to remember

On this deal there were two chances of success. If the club suit was good, twelve tricks would be easy. If the club suit was not good, there was an extra chance that the red suits would rescue you. To benefit from both chances, you needed to test the club suit right at the start.

PROBLEM 76

♥8 led

♠ Q 4 2

♥ Q J 10 6

♦ K 10 7 2

♣ Q 4

N

W E

S

♠ K 10 8

♥ A K 7 4

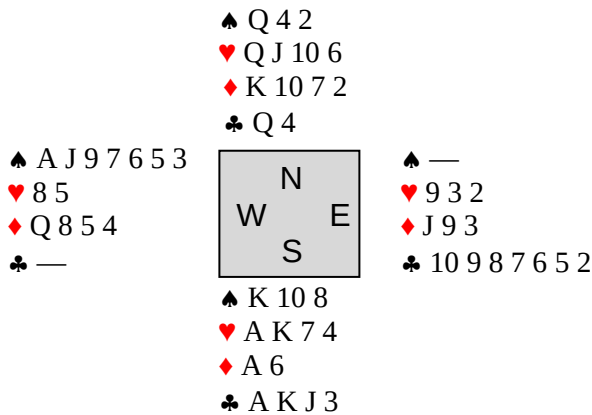
♦ A 6

♣ A K J 3

West	North	East	South
3♠	Pass	Pass	2♣
Pass	6NT	All pass	3NT

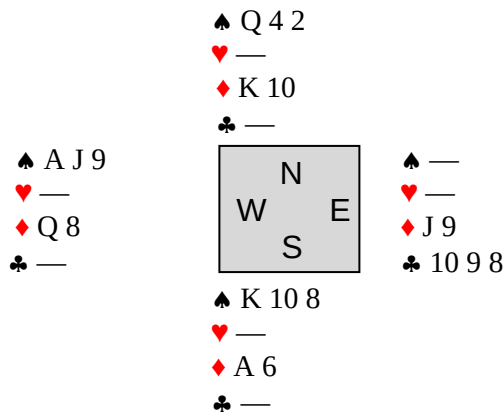
In the system being played, North would have doubled with a worthless hand. His pass therefore showed a few values. How would you play 6NT when West leads the ♥8?

SOLUTION 76



West, who overcalled 3♠ over South's 2♣, leads the ♥8 against 6NT

You have ten top tricks and a certain eleventh from the spade suit. How can you bump this to twelve? You should play your eight winners in hearts and clubs, keeping dummy's ♠Q-4-2 and discarding two diamonds. West has to reduce his hand to five cards and, on the assumption that he started with seven spades for his bid, you will know which cards he has kept. If he discards five spades, reducing to just A-J in the suit, you will play a spade and set up two tricks in that suit. Suppose instead that he keeps ♠A-J-9 and only two diamonds. This will be the position:



You play the ace and king of diamonds, removing West's last two non-spades. Now comes a spade to the king. If West wins, he will have to lead away from the ♠J. If instead he ducks, you will simply lead towards dummy's ♠Q to establish a second trick in the suit. 6NT bid and made!

PROBLEM 77

♥Q led

♠ A K 10 5 3

♥ 9 4

♦ 10 9 5

♣ A Q 4

N

W E

S

♠ Q 7

♥ A K 7 6 3

♦ A K Q

♣ K J 9

West	North	East	South
Pass	6NT	All pass	2NT

North decided against showing his spade suit, raising immediately to 6NT. West led the ♥Q and declarer won with the ♥A. When he continued with the queen and ace of spades, West showed out on the second round, discarding a diamond. Take the South cards now. How should you continue?

Bidding tip

When you and you partner have fairly balanced hands and a total of around 34 points, it is often right to bid the slam in no-trumps, rather than seeking a trump fit somewhere. This tactic can gain in two ways. You may be able to land 12 tricks when a bad break in the suit that you would otherwise have chosen as trumps would kill the suit slam. Also, you avoid the risk of an adverse ruff.

SOLUTION 77

♠ 2

♥ Q J 10 8

♦ J 7 4 3 2

♣ 7 5 3

♠ A K 10 5 3

♥ 9 4

♦ 10 9 5

♣ A Q 4

♠ J 9 8 6 4

♥ 5 2

♦ 8 6

♣ 10 8 6 2

♠ Q 7

♥ A K 7 6 3

♦ A K Q

♣ K J 9

N

W E

S

West leads the ♥Q against 6NT and you win with the ♥A. West shows out on the second round, discarding a diamond. How should you continue?

You have 11 top tricks. If hearts are 3-3 you can simply duck a heart but is that likely? West led the ♥Q from a sequence. Unless he has precisely ♥Q-J-10, he will hold four or more hearts. What else can you try?

If you can strip East of his non-spades, you will be able to end-play him in the spade suit. You cash the ♥K and your three top diamonds. East now has to find a black-suit discard. If he throws a spade, you will cross to a club honor and play king and another spade, setting up your twelfth trick in the spade suit. East will no doubt throw a club instead. Now three rounds of clubs, ending in the dummy, remove his club holding. These cards remain:

♠ —

♥ J 10

♦ J

♣ —

♠ K 10 5

♥ —

♦ —

♣ —

♠ J 9 8

♥ —

♦ —

♣ —

♠ —

♥ 7 6 3

♦ —

♣ —

N

W E

S

When you lead the ♠5, East wins with the ♠8 and has to lead into dummy's ♠K-10. The same play would succeed if East's shape was 5-2-3-3. Again you would strip his non-spades and end-play him.

PROBLEM 78

♠ 9 3
♥ 7 4
♦ A Q 9 5 2
♣ A Q 7 3

♣10 led

N
W E
S

♠ A Q 4
♥ A Q 9
♦ K J 10 7
♣ K J 5

West	North	East	South
Pass	6NT	All pass	2NT

As on the previous problem, North decided to bid the slam in no-trumps without investigating a suit fit. (Since there is a 5-4 diamond fit, 6♦ would in fact have been a marginally better contract. At IMPs this small advantage is negated in the long run by the 2 IMPs that you gain by playing in no-trumps. At match-point pairs, you would not dream of playing in diamonds.)

How will you play 6NT when West leads the ♣10?

Bidding tip

Look once again at the North hand. A further advantage of playing in 6NT rather than six of a minor is that South will be the declarer. The defenders will not be able to lead through declarer's, perhaps tenuous, holdings in the major suits. It is less of a worry that West will be able to lead through the A-Q combinations in the minors because South opened 2NT and may well hold both the minor-suit kings.

SOLUTION 78

♠ K 5 2
 ♥ K J 5 3
 ♦ 8 4
 ♣ 10 9 8 6

♠ 9 3
 ♥ 7 4
 ♦ A Q 9 5 2
 ♣ A Q 7 3

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

♠ A Q 4
 ♥ A Q 9
 ♦ K J 10 7
 ♣ K J 5

N
 W E
 S

What's your plan in 6NT when West leads the ♣10?

You have 11 tricks on top and could simply take two major-suit finesses, hoping that at least one of them will succeed. Can you see a better line of play, one that will give you an excellent chance even if both the missing kings are with West?

You win the club lead and play a second round of clubs, pleased to see both defenders follow. You play two more rounds of clubs, throwing the ♠4 from your hand. After two rounds of diamonds, eliminating that suit from the defenders' hands, you have reached this position:

♠ K 5 2
♥ K J 5 3
♦ —
♣ —

♠ 9 3
♥ 7 4
♦ Q 9 5
♣ —

♠ J 10 8 7
♥ 10 8 6
♦ —
♣ —

♠ A Q
♥ A Q 9
♦ J 10
♣ —

W N E S

You lead the ♥4 from dummy and finesse the ♥9. West wins with the ♥J but then has to present you with a twelfth trick by leading away from one of his kings. It would not help the defense for East to rise with the ♥10. You would cover with the ♥Q, losing to West's ♥K. Your ♥A-9 would then become a satisfactory tenace against West, again leaving him end-played.

PROBLEM 79

♠ A Q 10 8 2

♥ 8 4

♦ 7 2

♣ K 9 8 6

♦ J led

N

W E

S

♠ K J 3

♥ K 10 3

♦ A K Q 5

♣ A Q 3

West	North	East	South
3♥	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	4♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	5♥
Pass	6♣	Pass	6NT
All pass			

South uses Roman Key-card Blackwood to discover that his partner holds (i) one ace, and then (ii) the ♠Q and the ♣K. How will you play 6NT when West leads the ♦J? (You will discover that East holds four spades to West's one. When you cash five spade tricks, East will discard the ♥2 and West will discard four low hearts.)

Bidding tip

It would be a poor idea for South to bid the slam in spades. North would become the declarer and there would be a substantial chance of losing the first two tricks in hearts. South temporarily agrees spades as trumps, to discover that North holds one ace, the ♠Q and the ♣K. He then bids 6NT to protect his ♥K from the opening lead.

SOLUTION 79

♠ 5
♥ A Q J 9 7 6 5
♦ J 10 3
♣ J 2

♠ A Q 10 8 2
♥ 8 4
♦ 7 2
♣ K 9 8 6

♠ 9 7 6 4
♥ 2
♦ 9 8 6 4
♣ 10 7 5 4

♠ K J 3
♥ K 10 3
♦ A K Q 5
♣ A Q 3

W N E S

West, who opened 3♥, leads the ♦J against 6NT. How will you play?

A 3-3 club break would give you a twelfth trick. Otherwise you must hope to apply pressure on East, who is likely to hold length in both minor suits.

You play five rounds of spades, throwing two hearts. East needs to retain his guards in both minors and has to throw the ♥2. When you continue with the ♣A and ♣Q, the ♣J falls from West on the second round. You continue with the ♦K and ♦Q, West following all the way. What is West's shape? His 3♥ opening bid suggests seven hearts, so you can count him for 1-7-3-2 shape. That means that East's last three cards are the ♦9 and the ♣10-7!

♠ —
 ♥ 8
 ♦ —
 ♣ K 9

♠ —
 ♥ A Q J
 ♦ —
 ♣ —

♠ —
 ♥ —
 ♦ 9
 ♣ 10 7

♠ —
 ♥ K
 ♦ 5
 ♣ 3

N
 W E
 S

You throw East in with a diamond and he has to lead into dummy's $\clubsuit$ K-9. Maybe your reaction is 'Yes, yes, but I could never do plays like that.' By counting the opponents' hands, such plays do indeed become possible.

PROBLEM 80

	♠ 9 5 2											
	♥ A Q 7 4											
	♦ A Q 2											
	♣ J 6 4											
♠ 8 led	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S			
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ A Q 6											
	♥ K 10 5 3											
	♦ K 6 5											
	♣ A K Q											
West	North	East	South									
	1♣	Pass	1♥									
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠									
Pass	3♥	Pass	6NT									
All pass												

On this deal you will have the chance to compare your card-play with that of the great Omar Sharif, playing rubber bridge at the Club Albarran in Paris. How will you play 6NT when West leads the ♠8 to East's ♠10?

Bidding tip

South knew of a 4-4 heart fit after North's 3♥ bid. (Many players are willing to raise to 2♥ on only 3-card support, although this is less common at rubber bridge.) With a full 21 points opposite an opening bid, it is better tactics to bid the slam in no-trumps rather than hearts. You may then be able to survive a bad heart break by scoring tricks in the other three suits.

SOLUTION 80

♠ 9 5 2
♥ A Q 7 4
♦ A Q 2
♣ J 6 4

♠ 8 7
♥ J 9 6 2
♦ 10 8
♣ 10 9 7 3 2

♠ K J 10 4 3
♥ 8
♦ J 9 7 4 3
♣ 8 5

♠ A Q 6
♥ K 10 5 3
♦ K 6 5
♣ A K Q

West leads the ♠8 against 6NT and you win East's ♠10 with the ♠Q. How will you continue? We will let Omar describe his thoughts on the play:

‘Four heart tricks would bring my total to twelve. Playing hearts in standard fashion, cashing the ace and queen first, I would succeed if hearts broke 3-2, if the ♥J fell singleton or if East held four or five hearts to the jack. If, for some reason, I placed West with four hearts, I could succeed by cashing the king first, provided East’s singleton was the 8, 9 or jack.

After winning the first trick, I immediately ducked a round of spades. This would enable me to play three rounds of spades and perhaps discover how that suit lay. East won and switched to the ♣8, taken with the ace.

When I played a third round of spades, West showed out and I knew that East had started with five spades. His ♣8 switch suggested shortage in the suit. I decided to play three rounds of diamonds next, since only if East could be found with great length in spades and diamonds would it become advisable to play West for the heart length. My luck was in when West showed out on the third round of diamonds. East followed to the second round of clubs and I now knew his shape was either 5-0-5-3 or 5-1-5-2.

My next move was to play the ♥K. East followed with the ♥8, which I knew was his one and only heart. I now led the ♥3 and when West produced the ♥6 I played dummy's ♥7! East showed out and the slam was mine. It would do West no good to split his ♥J-9, of course, because I had retained one club honor as a re-entry to my hand to repeat the heart finesse.'

Point to remember

When you have a critical guess to make in a suit (hearts here), you should delay the guess as long as possible, seeking distributional information on the other three suits. Such fancy footwork would not be possible if the contract was 6♥.

Chapter 9

Thinking clearly

In this chapter we will look at some deals where you need to think carefully to arrive at the best line of play. It is always aggravating when you go down in a contract that you should have made. Your partner may ask you afterwards: ‘Why did you play it that way?’ It is not so good if your reply is: ‘I really don’t know. I suppose I didn’t think about it long enough.’

You’re not under any time pressure now! See how well you do on these ten problems.

PROBLEM 81

♠ 9 6 4
♥ A K Q
♦ K J 6 4
♣ A 9 4

♠K led

N
W E
S

♠ 2
♥ 10 9 6 5
♦ A Q 8 7
♣ K 7 5 2

West	North	East	South
2♠	Dble	3♠	4♥
All pass			

North would have liked to hold four cards in hearts (the ‘other major’) for his take-out double. You can only bid the cards you have been dealt and with 17 points North was entitled to double. How would you play the resultant 4♥ on a 4-3 trump fit (known as a Moysian fit)?

West leads the ♠K, overtaken by the ace, and East switches to the ♣Q. All will be easy if trumps break 3-3 but it is more likely that East will hold four trumps. What can you do in that case?

SOLUTION 81

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

West opens with a weak 2♠ (showing a 6-card suit and around 5-9 points). You end in 4♥ and West leads the ♠K. East realizes that the defenders will be able to take only one spade trick. If the defenders continue to play spades, they may assist you by allowing you to score several trump tricks in your hand. After some thought East overtakes with the ♠A and switches to the ♣Q. How will you play the contract?

With spades breaking 6-3, it will be no surprise if East holds four trumps. What can you do in that case? You win the club switch in dummy and ruff a spade in your hand. A trump to the ace is followed by a second spade ruff. Provided West started with six spades for his weak two-bid, you will have removed East's spade holding. You continue with the king and queen of hearts, West showing out on the third round.

You now have no trumps left and East has the jack of trumps. However, all is well because East has no spades left! You play three rounds of diamonds, East ruffing, win his club return with the king and make a third diamond trick to bring your total to ten.

Point to remember

When you are playing a major-suit game in a 4-3 trump fit, you often fear being forced to ruff in the 4-card holding. On some deals, however, you can bring your total to ten tricks by taking two or more ruffs in the long-trump hand. You cash a few side-suit tricks, add trump tricks from both hands and hope to **scramble** ten tricks.

A similar line of play was successful here because you could exhaust East's spades, not minding that you lost trump control.

PROBLEM 82

♠ K Q 7 6 2
♥ A K Q
♦ 7 4
♣ 8 5 3

♦K led

N
W E
S

♠ A
♥ 9 8 7 6 2
♦ J 8 2
♣ A Q 7 6

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

South’s response of 2♥ showed upwards of 10 points but was not forcing to game. With 14 points North judged to rebid 4♥ rather than 3♥, which would show a minimum opening.

West leads the ♦K against the heart game and continues with the ♦6 to East’s ♦A. How will you play the contract when East returns a third round of diamonds to your jack and West’s queen?

Bidding tip

Many players nowadays (particularly in the USA) treat a two-level response as game-forcing. That is the meaning of a ‘two-over-one system’. After a start of 1♠ – 2♥, it is convenient to be able to rebid a forcing 3♥ and allow space for cue-bidding below the game-level. Against that, you have to trade the fact that the range for a 1NT response is widened. Also, it is not particularly easy for the players to judge their combined values as they cue-bid towards the game-level.

SOLUTION 82

♠ K Q 7 6 2
 ♥ A K Q
 ♦ 7 4
 ♣ 8 5 3

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

♠ A
 ♥ 9 8 7 6 2
 ♦ J 8 2
 ♣ A Q 7 6

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

N
 W E
 S

West leads the $\spadesuit K$ against South's heart game. He continues with a diamond to East's $\spadesuit A$ and a third round of diamonds is returned. How will you play the contract? In particular, what will you do on this trick?

The deal comes from an old book on card-play and the authors recommend that you should preserve dummy's trump holding by throwing a club instead of ruffing. You win the trump return in dummy and finesse the ♣Q successfully. After playing the ♠A, you draw trumps in two more rounds and throw your remaining clubs on dummy's ♠K-Q. Do you see anything wrong with this analysis?

When West wins the third round of diamonds he can beat the contract by playing a fourth round of diamonds! This gives a ruff-and-sluff, yes, but it will also promote a trump trick for the defenders.

You can make the contract easily enough by ruffing the third diamond, rather than discarding a club. You finesse the ♣Q and play the ♠A. After drawing two rounds of trumps you play the ♠K-Q, throwing your remaining club losers. West is welcome to ruff the third spade with his ♥10, which has become promoted. You will lose only two diamonds and one trump.

Point to remember

It is a common source of error, for players as well as for bridge writers, to think that a particular (perhaps clever) play is all that is required and to proceed without any further thought. As soon as you think for a moment on this deal, you will realize that a fourth round of diamonds is almost certain to defeat the contract when diamonds are 5-3. You are missing the ♥J and the ♥10, so the odds are huge that the player with only three diamonds will hold one of those trump honors.

PROBLEM 83

♥3 led

♠ Q J 3

♥ A 7 4 2

♦ 9 6

♣ A 10 8 5

W

N

E

S

♠ A K 8 7 2

♥ —

♦ A K Q J 5

♣ 7 6 4

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♣	2♥	3♦
3♥	4♠	Pass	6♠
All pass			

How will you play the spade slam when West leads the ♥3?

Point to remember

When a contract looks comfortable, ask yourself: what bad break would put it at risk? On this deal you will have five spades, five diamonds and two aces if the two long suits behave. The most likely source of trouble is a 5-1 diamond break.

SOLUTION 83

♠ Q J 3
 ♥ A 7 4 2
 ♦ 9 6
 ♣ A 10 8 5

♠ 6 5
 ♥ Q 8 5 3
 ♦ 10 8 7 4 2
 ♣ J 3

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

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

N
 W E
 S

West leads the ♥3 against your small slam in spades. If spades and diamonds break favourably you will have twelve top tricks. It is hard to imagine how you could make the contract if you suffered a 5-0 trump break. The hostile break that you may be able to overcome is a 5-1 diamond break, provided it is East who holds the singleton.

Suppose you win the heart lead, throwing a club, play a diamond to the ace and then cash the queen and jack of trumps. When you lead dummy's last diamond, all will be well if East ruffs. He will, in effect, be ruffing your diamond loser. When you regain the lead you can play your remaining diamond winners, throwing two clubs from dummy. It will then be possible to ruff your last club loser in dummy, making the slam.

However, East can defeat you by not ruffing the second diamond. You win with the king and will have nowhere to go. If you ruff your diamond loser, East will overruff and you will still have a club loser.

To make the slam, you must follow a slightly different line, leaving a master trump in dummy. You play a low trump to the ace, cash the $\heartsuit A$ and return to dummy with the $\spadesuit Q$. Now East has no answer to the second diamond. If he ruffs, you will succeed as before. If he declines to ruff, you win with the king, ruff the $\heartsuit 5$ with the $\spadesuit J$ and lose only a club. Clever, eh?

Point to remember

Some players go down when there is a bad break against them and tell their partners: 'It wasn't very likely that diamonds would break 5-1!' That may be. When the contract is cold if diamonds are 4-2 or 3-3, all you really have to think about is whether you can counter a 5-1 diamond break. That is where you should apply your effort before starting to play the hand.

PROBLEM 84

♥4 led

♠ A 10 8 7

♥ 8 2

♦ 9 8 5 4 2

♣ K 7

N

W E

S

♠ —

♥ A 9 5 3

♦ K Q J 7 3

♣ A Q J 8

West	North	East	South
			1♦
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	6♦
All pass			

You may think that the auction was unimpressive but it is difficult to be scientific when you have a void in partner’s first-bid suit. How will you play the diamond slam when West leads the ♥3, East playing the ♥K?

Bidding tip

North was worth the limit raise to 3♦, despite holding only 7 HCPs. The more you play bridge, the more you realize the value of holding plenty of trumps. When partner has shown 5 cards in a suit, 4-card support is so much more valuable than 3-card support. When you hold 5-card support, well, you can reach for the skies

SOLUTION 84

	♠ A 10 8 7										
	♥ 8 2										
	♦ 9 8 5 4 2										
	♣ K 7										
♠ Q 9 4 2		♠ K J 6 5 3									
♥ Q 10 7 4		♥ K J 6									
♦ A		♦ 10 6									
♣ 10 6 4 3		♣ 9 5 2									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ —										
	♥ A 9 5 3										
	♦ K Q J 7 3										
	♣ A Q J 8										

West leads the ♥4 against your small slam in diamonds, East playing the ♥K. How will you play the slam after winning with the ♥A?

The original declarer saw that defeat would stare him in the face if he played trumps next. Needing to dispose of dummy's heart loser, he had to risk playing three top clubs before drawing trumps. After playing the ♣K and ♣A, he tried to increase his chances by leading the ♣J. The idea was that if West had started with a doubleton club he might place East with the ♣Q and not ruff declarer's jack.

Nothing came of that, in practice. The third club survived unruffed and declarer discarded dummy's remaining heart. With a sigh of relief he then led a trump. West won with the bare ♦A and was quick to lead a fourth round of clubs. East overruffed dummy's ♦9 with the ♦10 and the slam went one down.

What could declarer have done about it? When in dummy with the ♣K, he should have thrown one of his remaining club honors on the ♠A! If West subsequently played a fourth round of clubs, declarer would be able to overruff East's ♦10.

Point to remember

On this deal you can see that you will need three rounds of clubs to survive unruffed (unless a defender ruffs the third round with the bare ♦A). Having made this observation, it is all too easy to lose concentration and proceed without further thought. Instead, you should pause for a moment, considering the rest of the play. With any luck, the risk posed by a fourth round of clubs will loom into view!

PROBLEM 85

♠ 6 5 4
♥ 10 8 7 3 2
♦ 10 5
♣ K 7 3

♠ K led

N
W E
S

♠ A 2
♥ A K 9 4
♦ A J 6 3 2
♣ A 4

West	North	East	South
			2NT
Pass	3♦	Pass	4♥
All pass			

What would you open on those South cards? There is little to choose between 1♦ and 2NT. The former opening might lead to a missed 4♥ when partner held 3 or 4 points and length in hearts. The actual choice of 2NT might carry you too high when partner has a bust.

North’s 3♦ response was a transfer bid, showing at least five hearts. South would usually respond 3♥ but with his excellent heart support he ‘broke the transfer’ and jumped to 4♥.

How would you play this contract when West leads the ♠K?

Bidding tip

Consider the value of the South hand when North shows five hearts, compared with showing five spades. The hand becomes enormous! You have 4-card trump support, two doubletons where ruffs may be possible, also a 5-card diamond suit that might be established.

You would rebid just 3♠ opposite a transfer response of 3♥, yes. It would be a big mistake to show the same reaction when partner has shown hearts. You break the transfer not only to ensure that you reach game, but also as a springboard to a possible slam, should partner have values to spare.

SOLUTION 85

♠ 6 5 4
♥ 10 8 7 3 2
♦ 10 5
♣ K 7 3

♠ K Q J
♥ Q 6 5
♦ K Q 9 8
♣ J 10 5

W N E S

♠ A 2
♥ A K 9 4
♦ A J 6 3 2
♣ A 4

♠ 10 9 8 7 3
♥ J
♦ 7 4
♣ Q 9 8 6 2

How would you play 4♥ when West leads the ♠K?

The original declarer won with the ♠A and cashed the ace and king of trumps. The game could no longer be made! What was declarer's mistake? Right, he failed to make a plan.

You plan a suit contract by looking at the losers in the long-trump hand (North here). You begin with two losers in spade suit, at most one in the trump suit (you hope), one in diamonds and one in clubs. That is a total of five and you can reduce this to three by ruffing a spade and club in the South hand.

If you play the ace and king of trumps too early, the defenders will have a chance to draw a third round of trumps when you duck a spade to prepare for your ruff in that suit. Best play is to win the spade lead and immediately return a spade. Suppose that West wins and switches to the ♣J. You win with the ace, draw one round of trumps and then play ace and another diamond. When you win the defenders' return, you will draw a second round of trumps and embark on a cross-ruff. The defenders score a diamond, a spade and a trump.

Point to remember

Drawing trumps is a much more complicated subject than some players imagine. Usually it suits you to leave a master trump outstanding. When you will (or may) have a trump loser, it is often right to set up your ruffs before cashing the top trumps. Otherwise a defender may have the chance to spoil your intentions by drawing an extra round of trumps.

PROBLEM 86

♠ K
♥ A J 9 6 2
♦ A 7
♣ A 10 9 7 6

♦K led

N
W E
S

♠ A Q J 9 8 7 3
♥ 4
♦ J 5 4
♣ K 4

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	4♠
Pass	6♠	All pass	

South showed excellent spades with his leap to 4♠ and North raised to a small slam, hoping that one of his long suits could be established. How would you play 6♠ when West leads the ♦K?

You can expect to make seven spades and your four top winners in the side suits. Where is the twelfth trick coming from?

Bidding tip

North’s rebid of 3♣ is generally played as forcing to game. That doesn’t mean that South should bid only 3♠ at his third turn. The leap to 4♠ described his hand well and was the reason that North felt able to advance to 6♠.

SOLUTION 86

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

How would you play 6♠ when West leads the ♦K?

The original declarer won with the ♦A and conceded a second round of diamonds, hoping to score a diamond ruff as his twelfth trick. Sadly for him, he was not playing against complete idiots! When West won the second round of diamonds, he returned a trump, to prevent a diamond ruff.

Declarer's remaining option was to establish the club suit for a discard of his diamond loser. He crossed to the ♣K and drew the remaining trumps. He then played a club to the ace and ruffed a club in his hand. Since there was only one remaining entry to dummy (the ♥A) he needed the clubs to break 3-3. Not on this occasion and the slam went one down. 'You didn't have very much for me,' he informed his partner.

To take best advantage of the two chances for a twelfth trick (a diamond ruff or setting up the clubs), you should duck the first trick, allowing West's ♦K to win. If West switches to a trump now, to prevent a diamond ruff, the ♦A will be intact as an extra entry to dummy. After drawing trumps, you will be able to establish the club suit against a 4-2 break, taking two ruffs, and the contract will be yours. If instead West plays a second round of diamonds to dislodge dummy's ace, you can score a diamond ruff in dummy for your twelfth trick.

Point to remember

By ducking the first round of diamonds, you keep both your options alive. West can prevent one of them but not both. This is one of many plays that are easy to spot if you have seen them before. The first time you encounter such a situation, it is much harder even to consider the winning play.

PROBLEM 87

♥2 led

♠ A 7 6 5 2

♥ A 8 6

♦ A 8 3

♣ 6 5

N

W E

S

♠ K Q J 10 9 4

♥ 10 5

♦ J 7 2

♣ K 4

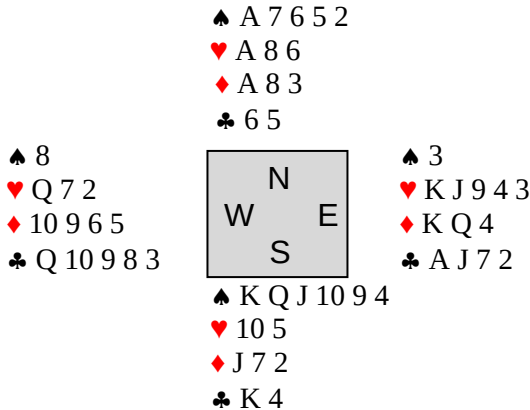
West	North	East	South
		1♥	2♠
Pass	4♠	All pass	

You start with a weak jump overcall in spades (not so weak on this occasion) and partner raises to game. How will you tackle the contract when West leads the ♥2?

Bidding tip

Some players would overcall 1♠ on the South cards, thinking they were too strong for a weak jump overcall. The hand will score several tricks in a spade contract and relatively few if employed in defense. On such a hand you should lean towards a pre-emptive bid, to remove the opponents' bidding space.

SOLUTION 87



East opens 1♥ and you reach 4♠. How will you play when the ♥2 is led?

You can see one loser in hearts, two potential losers in diamonds and one loser in clubs (assuming, as you must, that East holds the ♣A). You cannot avoid a heart loser, so diamonds is the problem suit. You must aim to eliminate hearts and clubs, after which you can lead a low diamond towards the jack, catching East in an end-play if he holds the ♦K and ♦Q.

It would not suit you for West to gain the lead, because he could play a diamond through the ace before you had completed the elimination. So, play low at Trick 1, allowing East (the safe hand) to win the first round of hearts. You win the heart continuation with the ace and lead a club towards the king. East rises with the ace and plays a second club to your king.

You then overtake the ♠9 with the ♠A and ruff dummy’s last heart with a high trump. With hearts and clubs eliminated, you play the carefully preserved ♠4 to dummy’s ♠7 and lead a low diamond towards the jack. East wins with one diamond honor but must then lead away from his other honor or give you a ruff-and-sluff. Ten tricks are yours.

(If East plays low on the first round of clubs, you will draw trumps, eliminate hearts and exit in clubs, forcing the defenders to play on the diamond suit with the same effect.)

Point to remember

An experienced player would survey the diagram and mutter: ‘Elimination play, leading towards the ♦J.’ Yes indeed, but it was still necessary to pay attention to the detail. Ducking the first round of hearts was essential or West would have a second chance to lead a diamond through the ace. It was also necessary to retain your ♠4 to reach dummy at the key moment.

PROBLEM 88

♠ 10 9

♥ 7

♦ 9 8 7 4 2

♣ 10 8 5 4 3

♣A led

N

W E

S

♠ A K J 8 7 6 2

♥ A K 5 2

♦ A

♣ 6

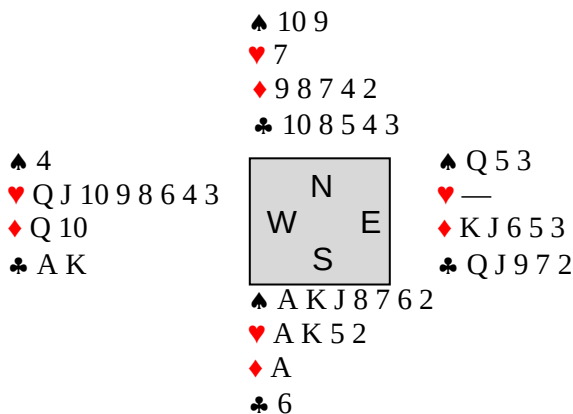
West	North	East	South
			2♣
4♥	Pass	Pass	4♠
All pass			

West leads the ♣A and ♣K against your spade game. How will you play the contract after ruffing the second club?

Bidding tip

The South hand contains only 19 points but it is reasonable to open 2♣. There are few hands you could place opposite that would not offer good play for a spade game. Also, if partner held ♥Q-10-x-x-x, he might pass 1♠ when a small slam in hearts was cold.

SOLUTION 88



West, who overcalled 4♥ over your 2♣ opening, leads the ♣A against your game in spades. He continues with the ♣K. How will you play after ruffing the second club?

There are three potential losers in the major suits and it is reasonable to turn your mind towards a heart ruff. Suppose you play the ♥A at Trick 3. Disaster! East will ruff and return a trump. There will be only one trump left in dummy. If you use it to ruff one of your heart losers, East will overruff with the queen. You will then lose two trumps, one club and one heart, going one down. You can hardly claim that the 8-0 heart break was ‘unbelievable bad luck’ after West’s 4♥ overcall!

The winning play is to lead a *low* heart at Trick 3. When you regain the lead, you will be able to ruff your other heart loser in the dummy. East is welcome to overruff because this will consume his natural trump trick. You will lose one club, one heart and one overruff. Game made!

Point to remember

The winning play may seem easy to miss (particularly if you did miss it!) You should say to yourself: ‘I can afford to lose one trump, one heart and one club. What I cannot afford is to have a heart honor ruffed and then to lose a further two heart tricks.’

Once you have seen a play of this type, it becomes easier to spot the next time the situation arises at the table.

PROBLEM 89

♥A led

♠ Q 9 6

♥ J 10 2

♦ J 7 3

♣ K J 3 2

N

W E

S

♠ A 8 7 4 3

♥ Q 9 4

♦ A K Q

♣ A 6

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

West leads the ♥A and ♥K against your spade game, East playing the ♥3 and the ♥7. West continues with a third round of hearts to East's ♥8 and your ♥Q. How will you continue the play?

Bidding tip

Some players open 2NT when they hold a balanced 19-count. There is little point in this, since you need partner to be able to respond to a one-bid before a game will be possible. Meanwhile, you will be too high when partner turns up with a bust.

SOLUTION 89

♠ K 10
♥ A K 6 5
♦ 8 5 2
♣ Q 10 8 5

♠ Q 9 6
♥ J 10 2
♦ J 7 3
♣ K J 3 2

N

W E

S

♠ A 8 7 4 3
♥ Q 9 4
♦ A K Q
♣ A 6

♠ J 5 2
♥ 8 7 3
♦ 10 9 6 4
♣ 9 7 4

West, who made a take-out double over your 1♠ opening, leads ace, king and another heart. East follows all the way, playing his cards upwards, and you win the third round with the queen. What now?

There are only 13 points out, so there is every chance that West will hold the ♠K. The original declarer continued with ace and another trump. He nodded happily as the ♠K appeared on this left. The smile vanished from his face when West continued with a fourth round of hearts, promoting his partner's ♠J into the setting trick.

How could this sad turn of events have been avoided? At Trick 4 you should lead a low trump towards the queen. It will now do no good for West to rise with the ♠K and lead his fourth heart. If East ruffs with the ♠J, you can overruff with your ♠A and draw the outstanding trumps.

The recommended line of play would fail if West's trumps were ♠K-J-x or ♠K-10-x, because he could rise with the ♠K and promote a second defensive trump trick with a further heart lead. Once West has made a take-out double on minimum values, however, he is much more likely to hold two spades than three.

Point to remember

Although the contract could (and should) have been made, it was clever play by West to play three rounds of hearts. He could see that there was little chance of a minor-suit switch being productive.

PROBLEM 90

♠ Q J 10 8
♥ 5 4 2
♦ Q 3
♣ A J 7 3

♦ A led

N
W E
S

♠ A K 7 5 4
♥ A Q 6
♦ 10 4
♣ K 10 8

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	Pass	1♠
2♦	2♥	3♦	4♠
All pass			

North bids 2♥ (one of West’s suits) to show a sound raise in spades to at least the two-level. West cashes the two top diamonds against your eventual 4♠ and switches to a trump. When you play a second round of trumps to dummy’s queen, East discards a diamond (West began with ♠9-6-2).

How will you continue to play the spade game? In particular, how will you play the club suit (where it seems that you will need a full four tricks, in order to discard the ♥6)?

Bidding tip

Since South’s 1♠ bid in the protective seat might be lighter than a second-seat overcall, some North players would ‘subtract a king’ from their own hand before deciding how strongly to support. They might bid only 2♠, rather than the stronger 2♥.

I don’t think that is right on this hand. Once West has made a second bid, you would need to support spades (with 2♠) on much weaker hands than North’s 10-count. North was surely right to bid a full 2♥ on those cards.

SOLUTION 90

	♠ Q J 10 8										
	♥ 5 4 2										
	♦ Q 3										
	♣ A J 7 3										
♠ 9 6 2		♠ 3									
♥ K J 9 7 3		♥ 10 8									
♦ A K J 8		♦ 9 7 6 5 2									
♣ 2		♣ Q 9 6 5 4									
	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K 7 5 4										
	♥ A Q 6										
	♦ 10 4										
	♣ K 10 8										

You arrive in 4♠ after West has bid hearts and diamonds, East finding a diamond raise. West cashes the ♦A and ♦K, before switching to a trump. You win in the South hand and cross to the ♠Q, East showing out. How will you play the clubs?

There are only 14 points missing and yet East found a raise of 2♦ to 3♦. How can that be? He must surely hold five diamonds to raise on such a weak hand. This leaves West with 3-5-4-1 shape. He holds only one club and you need to score four club tricks. How can this be done?

Suppose your first move in the club suit is to finesse the ♣10. The finesse will win but East's remaining clubs will prevent you from scoring four club tricks. Instead you must lead the ♣J from dummy on the first round (well, it is the last problem in the chapter!). If East declines to cover, you run the jack and can then finesse the ♣10 on the next round. Let's say that East covers the ♣J with the ♣Q. You win with the ♣K and return to dummy with a third round of trumps. This is why you didn't draw the last trump before playing on clubs.

The way is clear to finesse the ♣8. You can then cash the ♣K, cross to dummy's last trump and throw a heart loser on the ♣A. The game is made and you have every reason to expect a few kind words from your partner.

Point to remember

Many wonderful plays become possible when you have obtained a 'complete count of the hand'. What does that mean? It means that you know how many cards each defender holds in every suit. Here you were able to count West for 3-5-4-1 shape, using information from the bidding (marking the diamond distribution) and the play (when East showed out on the second trump).

Chapter 10

Grand slams

Many grand slams present little interest in the play because there are fewer options for the declarer. Nevertheless, the grand slams in this chapter will present you with a worthwhile challenge. Rest assured that on many of them the original declarer found absolutely no difficulty in going down.

PROBLEM 91

♠ —

♥ 9

♦ A Q 10 9 4

♣ A 10 9 7 6 5 3

♠ A 10

♥ A K Q 10 4 3 2

♦ K 8

♣ J 2

♣K led

N

W E

S

West	North	East	South
	1♣	4♠	4NT
Pass	5♣	Pass	7NT
Dble	All pass		

Brian Zietman told me of this amusing deal from the Israeli mixed pairs championship, where he sat West. South intended his 4NT as straight Blackwood for aces. North was not on the same wavelength and rebid her clubs. Perhaps thinking that North was treating 4NT as Roman Key-card Blackwood, showing the ♦A and the ♣A-K, South now leapt to 7NT!

How will you play the grand slam when West doubles and leads the ♣K?

Bidding tip

If the bidding starts with 1♥ and a 4♠ overcall, many partnerships treat 4NT by responder as showing the minors. How about 4♠ here? It could be either form of Blackwood (as above) or it could show the red suits. Sometimes you just have to know your bidding system!

SOLUTION 91

♠ —
♥ 9
♦ A Q 10 9 4
♣ A 10 9 7 6 5 3

♠ 8 7 2
♥ 6 5
♦ J 6 5 3 2
♣ K Q 4

♠ A 10
♥ A K Q 10 4 3 2
♦ K 8
♣ J 2

♠ K Q J 9 6 5 4 3
♥ J 8 7
♦ 7
♣ 8

N
W E
 S

You reach 7NT, doubled by West, after a mix-up in the bidding. How will you plan the play when West leads the ♣K to dummy's ace?

Both defenders follow to the first two rounds of hearts, you are pleased to see. It would be poor play to turn immediately to the diamond suit. Instead, you should cash your hearts, hoping to apply pressure on West. East has shown up with three hearts in addition to the advertised spade length. West may therefore hold diamond length in addition to the presumed ♣K-Q.

West throws three spades, a diamond and a club, leaving:

♠ —
♥ —
♦ A Q 10 9 4
♣ —

♠ —
♥ —
♦ J 6 5 3
♣ Q

♠ A 10
♥ —
♦ K 8
♣ J

♠ K Q J 9
♥ —
♦ 7
♣ —

N
W E
 S

You play the ♠A, forcing West to make one more discard. If he throws the ♣Q, you will score the ♣J, followed by three top diamonds. If instead he throws a diamond, you will be spared any guess as to whether you should finesse on the second round.

‘I led the king of clubs and waited for one down doubled,’ Brian Zietman told me. ‘I am still waiting!’

PROBLEM 92

♥9 led

♠ A J 9 8

♥ A 7 6 3

♦ K 9

♣ A Q 3

N

W E

S

♠ K Q 10 6 3

♥ 5

♦ A 7 4 2

♣ K 8 2

West	North	East	South
		2♥	2♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♠
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♣
Pass	7♠	All pass	

South’s 5♠, in response to Roman Key-card Blackwood, showed two key cards (the trump king and the ♦A) plus the trump queen. His subsequent 6♣ showed the ♣K. This was enough to encourage North to bid a grand slam in spades.

How would you play this contract when West leads the ♥9?

Point to remember

When a contract looks absolutely solid, ask yourself what possible bad break can prevent your intended line of play from succeeding.

SOLUTION 92

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

You reach 7♠ after East has opened with a weak two-bid in hearts. How will you play the grand slam when West leads the ♥9?

The original declarer won with dummy's ace and played two rounds of trumps, West discarding a diamond on the second round. He then needed to ruff his two diamond losers in dummy. He played king and another diamond and - oh no! - East ruffed the second round. The grand slam was one down. It was unlucky to find East with three trumps and a singleton diamond, but there was a better way to play the contract — a dummy reversal.

If you treat dummy as the master hand, you need to ruff three hearts in the South hand. At Trick 2 you ruff a heart with the ♠10. You cross to the ♦K and ruff a heart with the ♠Q. A trump to the 9 is followed by a heart ruff with the ♠K. You then cross to the ♠J and draw East's last trump. The grand slam has been safely brought into harbour.

You start with six side-suit winners and need to add seven trump tricks. Four trump tricks in the North hand plus three ruffs in the South hand bring the total to thirteen.

Point to remember

A single ruff in the long-trump hand will not bring you an extra trick. If you take enough ruffs for the other hand to become the longer-trump hand, you will have added to your trick total. Here just two ruffs in the South hand would leave North with longer trumps than South. Three ruffs will bring the total to the required 13.

PROBLEM 93

♠ 9 7 3

♥ A

♦ 10 7 6 5 2

♣ 8 6 4 3

♦ A led

N

W E

S

♠ A K Q J 10 8 4 2

♥ 5

♦ —

♣ A K Q 10

West	North	East	South
			2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	7♠
All pass			

South sets spades as trumps with his jump rebid and North’s cue-bid in hearts shows a control in the suit. South bids 4NT, to check that North’s heart control is the ace, and promptly bids the grand slam.

How will you play this contract when West leads the ♦A?

SOLUTION 93

♠ 9 7 3
 ♥ A
 ♦ 10 7 6 5 2
 ♣ 8 6 4 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

♠ 6 5
 ♥ Q J 9 7 5 3
 ♦ Q 9 8 3
 ♣ 9

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

How will you play the grand slam in spades when West leads the $\spadesuit A$?

At first glance, you need to score four club tricks. If East began with four clubs to the jack, this will be revealed when you play two top clubs from your hand. You can then cross to dummy to finesse the ♣10 on the third round. Is there any chance when West holds ♣J-x-x-x?

Thanks to West's opening lead, you can set up a long diamond if the suit breaks 4-4! You ruff the first trick with the ♠10, preserving your three lower trumps. You overtake the ♠8 with the ♠9 and ruff a diamond with the ace. You then overtake the ♠4 with the ♠7 and ruff a diamond with the king. You play two top clubs, revealing the bad break. When you lead the ♠2 to the ♠3 and ruff yet another diamond, the suit breaks 4-4. You can then return to dummy with the ♥A and discard the ♣10 on the thirteenth heart.

A heart lead beats the slam, removing a key entry to dummy. Could West find such a lead? Not easy, certainly, but the bidding placed North with the ♥A. Declarer was more or less marked with a void diamond and some sort of black two-suiter. A heart lead might work well. For example, it could force declarer to guess whether to finesse in hearts (if dummy held ♥A-Q) before he knew that the clubs were breaking unfavourably.

Point to remember

Text-books tell you to lead passively against a grand slam, usually commending a trump lead. Recent computer simulations have shown that a trump lead is rarely best against a grand slam. Look for a suit where you may remove an entry to the dummy. If you have a long suit, lead it and hope that partner can ruff. (Do not assume that partner will always make a Lightner Double when he has a side-suit void. The opponents may then run to a making 7NT.)

PROBLEM 94

♥J led

♠ A 10 7 5 3

♥ A

♦ 8

♣ Q J 8 7 6 3

W

N

E

S

♠ K 4

♥ K 7

♦ A Q 9 7 5 4 2

♣ A K

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♣
Pass	6♣	Pass	6♦
Pass	7♣	All pass	

In my stories of the bridge-crazy monks of St Titus, the pompous Abbot endures many of the hardships that bridge can offer. His opponents misplay and misbid, somehow always ending on their feet. Truth was stranger than fiction on this deal from the 2002 Hampshire and Isle of Wight Swiss Pairs, played in Guildford.

On the second round of the auction South cue-bid 4♣ to show the ♣A. North assumed that the bid was natural and raised to 6♣. The lady in the South seat did not like the sound of this. She corrected to 6♦ and was even more alarmed when her partner bid 7♣.

There was no further bidding, so South ended in a grand slam played in a suit that she had cue-bid. How would you play 7♣ when West, a well-known bridge writer, leads the ♥J?

SOLUTION 94

♠ A 10 7 5 3

♥ A

♦ 8

♣ Q J 8 7 6 3

♠ 8 6 2

♥ J 10 5 2

♦ K J 3

♣ 10 9 4

♠ K 4

♥ K 7

♦ A Q 9 7 5 4 2

♣ A K

♠ Q J 9

♥ Q 9 8 6 4 3

♦ 10 6

♣ 5 2

N

W

S

E

West leads the ♥J against the club grand slam and you win with dummy’s bare ace. What is your plan to land thirteen tricks?

Declarer immediately set about establishing dummy’s long side suit. The king and ace of spades were followed by a spade ruff with the ♣K. When spades divided 3-3, declarer cashed the ♣A. She returned to dummy by ruffing the ♥K and drew the outstanding trumps with the ♣Q-J. Dummy was then high.

I forget if my partner and I managed to say ‘Well played’. Declarer had not taken the best line, though. It was better to rely on a 3-2 diamond break than a 3-3 spade break.

You win the heart lead, cross to the ♦A and ruff a diamond low. A trump to the ace is followed by the king of trumps and a third round of diamonds ruffed with the ♣Q. The last trump is drawn with the ♣J and the grand slam is made.

Point to remember

When there are an even number of cards missing in a suit, the odds are against them breaking evenly. Here there were six spades missing and the odds were against a 3-3 break. In the diamond suit there were five cards missing. An odd number of cards are likely to break as evenly as possible. A 3-2 break is in fact a 68% chance, while a 3-3 break is a 36% chance.

PROBLEM 95

♠ A Q 7 6

♥ A K 10 7 3

♦ A 9 4

♣ 3

♠ 4 led

N

W E

S

♠ K J 5 3 2

♥ 8 5

♦ K

♣ A 10 8 7 4

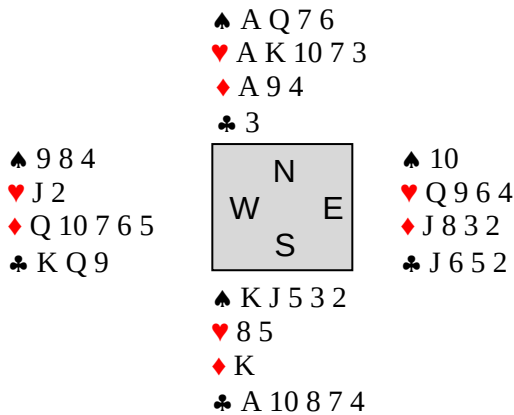
West	North	East	South
			1♣
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♦
Pass	7♠	All pass	

South arrived in 7♠ after North had used Roman Key-card Blackwood. South's 5♥ response showed one ace and the king of trumps. His subsequent 6♦ response showed specifically the ♦K. How would you play the grand slam when West leads a trump?

Bidding tip

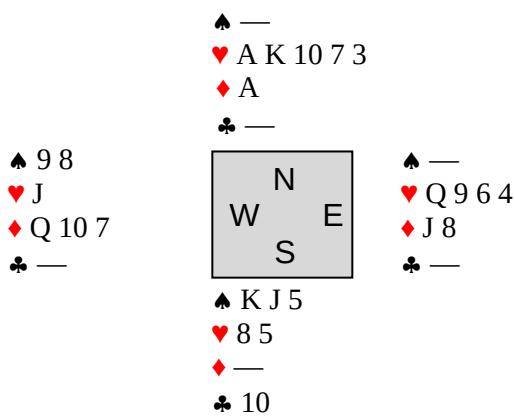
When partner follows a Roman Key-card Blackwood 4NT with 5NT, this is an enquiry for side-suit kings. Easily the best way to respond is to bid the suit where you hold a king (or your lowest king). In other words, you identify the king, rather than just giving a count of kings. Here South's 6♦ shows the ♦K and denies the ♣K. He would sign off in 6♠ with no side-suit king.

SOLUTION 95



West leads a low trump against 7♠. You count five trump tricks and five side-suit winners. Three club ruffs will bring your total to thirteen.

You win the ♠4 lead with the ♠A, cross to the ♣A and ruff a club low. A diamond to the king is followed by a second club ruff with a low trump. You ruff the ♦9 low and ruff a third club with dummy's last trump, West throwing a heart. These cards remain:



The original declarer now needed to reach his hand to draw trumps. It was obviously very risky to play ace, king and another heart. To reduce the chance of the defenders scoring a heart ruff, he cashed the ♦A, throwing one of his hearts, and then played the ♥A and another heart. West, who had discarded a heart on the last club ruff, was able to overruff the ♠5.

Did you notice declarer's blind spot? Since the ♣10 was established, he should simply have ruffed the ♦A, drawn trumps and claimed!

PROBLEM 96

♠ A K Q
♥ A Q
♦ A J 9
♣ A 8 6 3 2

♠ J led

N
W E
S

♠ —
♥ K J 10 9 4 3
♦ 7 6 4 3
♣ K J 4

West	North	East	South
	2♣	Pass	2♥
Pass	2NT	Pass	4♥
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♦
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♣
Pass	7♥	All pass	

North’s 4NT was Roman Key-card Blackwood, the response showing either an ace or the king of trumps. 5NT asked South to name any specific king he might hold and the 6♣ response showed the ♣K.

How would you play 7♥ when West leads the ♠J?

Bidding tip

A few decades back, players gave a positive response to 2♣ when they held a certain number of points or ‘an ace and a king’. The modern style is to save space with a 2♦ response, even when you are quite strong. The time to make a positive response is when you have a strong suit to show.

SOLUTION 96

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

West leads the ♠J against your grand slam in hearts. You can count twelve top tricks and one obvious route to a thirteenth trick is to finesse the ♣J. If this was the recommended line of play, after 195 pages of this learned work, you would be entitled to look a bit disgruntled.

The best line is to set up dummy's club suit. After West's spade lead, you will be able to do this against a 4-1 club break. You win the spade lead, discarding a club, and cash a second top spade, throwing another club. You then cross to the ♣K and return to dummy with a trump. A club ruff (with a high trump if East produces a second club) is followed by another trump to dummy and a second club ruff. Finally, you draw the last two trumps, throwing dummy's two diamond losers, and cross to dummy with the ♦A. Dummy is then high.

If West had led a trump (or a diamond), removing a useful entry to dummy, he would have beaten the slam. Would an expert West have found one of the winning leads? No! Leading away from the ♦K against a grand slam would be a wild stab in the dark. It is also dangerous to lead a singleton trump. There is too much risk that you will catch partner's Q-x-x or J-x-x-x.

PROBLEM 97

♠ 8 6 3 2
♥ Q J 8
♦ A 10 5 2
♣ J 5

♠K led

N
W E
S

♠ —
♥ A K 10 9 7 6
♦ K 7 3
♣ A K Q 9

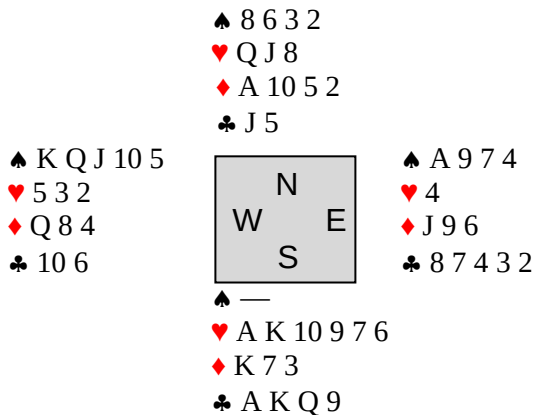
West	North	East	South
			1♥
1♠	2♥	3♠	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	7♥
All pass			

How would you play 7♥ when West leads the ♠K?

Bidding tip

East’s 3♠ was pre-emptive. With a sound raise, he would have bid 3♥ instead. What meaning would you attribute to South’s 4♣? If the opponents had not intervened, it would have been a clear-cut slam try, usually showing the second half of a big two-suiter. On this deal it was possible also that South was indicating a good opening lead, should the defenders choose to sacrifice in spades. In any case, North could not be wrong to show his ♦A and this was enough to persuade South to go ‘all in’, bidding a grand slam.

SOLUTION 97



West leads the ♠K against your grand slam in hearts. What line of play will you choose?

If trumps are 2-2, you can throw two diamonds from dummy on your clubs and eventually ruff a diamond in dummy. A much better idea is to reverse the dummy — to take several ruffs in the long-trump hand and eventually draw trumps in the other hand.

You ruff the spade lead, cross to the ♣J and ruff another spade. A diamond to the ace is followed by a third spade ruff with the ♥A. A trump to dummy’s jack permits a fourth spade ruff with the ♥K. You then cross to the ♥Q and draw West’s last trump with the ♥8. North’s two diamond losers are thrown on the surplus clubs and the grand slam is made.

You score three trump tricks in dummy, four ruffs in the South hand and six minor-suit winners. Had West led a trump, the lead traditionally recommended against a grand slam, he would have defeated the contract!

Point to remember

A ruff in the long-trump hand does not normally give you an extra trick. If you can take enough ruffs in the long-trump hand to leave the other hand with more trumps, then you do gain a trick. That’s what happened here. After four ruffs in the South hand, North held two trumps to South’s one. Three trump tricks from North plus four ruffs by South was a total of seven trump tricks – one more than would have been scored after simply running South’s trump suit. As we have seen before, this is the principle of the ‘dummy reversal’.

PROBLEM 98

	♠ A J 7											
	♥ 8 6 2											
	♦ A K Q 10 4											
	♣ 6 3											
♣9 led	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S			
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ K Q 10 9 2											
	♥ A K Q 4											
	♦ 7 6 3											
	♣ A											
West	North	East	South									
	1♦	3♣	3♠									
Pass	4♠	Pass	4NT									
Pass	5♥	Pass	5NT									
Pass	7♠	All pass										

How would you play 7♠ when West leads the ♣9? (East was vulnerable, so it is reasonable to assume that he will hold at least seven clubs for his weak jump overcall of 3♣.)

Bidding tip

South’s 5NT asks for side-suit kings, yes, but it carries a further message: ‘All the key cards are present — the four aces and the K-Q of trumps. Bid a grand directly, partner, if you have a source of tricks to add to the total.’ With his splendid diamond suit likely to provide several tricks, North duly bid 7♠.

SOLUTION 98

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

East bids 3♣ over North's 1♦ and West leads the ♣9 against your grand slam in spades. How will you tackle the play?

All will be well if hearts break 3-3. The diamond suit offers an even better chance. You could cash two top honors in dummy. If West started with ♦J-x-x-x (and he is the defender more likely to be long in diamonds, since he's shorter in clubs), a finesse against the ♦J will be possible. In these circumstances it is tempting indeed to draw trumps first.

The original declarer looked more deeply into the position. He cashed just the ace and king of trumps, revealing the 4-1 break. East presumably held seven clubs for his vulnerable overcall. He had one trump too, so he could not hold more than five hearts. It was therefore safe to cash the ♥A. When East followed, he could hold at most four diamonds, so it was safe to cash the ♦A. East also followed to this card, so it was now safe to cash the ♥K. When East showed out, West was known to hold five hearts alongside the two outstanding trumps. It was safe to cash the ♥Q and ruff a heart!

With a heart ruff safely under his belt, declarer returned to hand with a club ruff to draw West's outstanding trumps. Grand slam made! As you see, East held ♦J-x-x-x offside. If you play too quickly and draw all the trumps at the start, you will go down.

Point to remember

When you have spotted a line of play that gives you a good chance of success, it is all too easy to stop thinking and set off along that track. This may be OK in a social game. In a tournament, particularly when you're in a high-value contract, it pays to think for a while longer. Perhaps there is an even safer line – one that on this particular occasion may be necessary to make the contract.

PROBLEM 99

♠ 7
♥ A K 10 3
♦ 9 5
♣ A K Q 9 6 3

♦K led

N
W E
S

♠ A 9 6
♥ Q 9 7 4
♦ A 10 6 3
♣ 7 2

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♥
1♠	3♠	Pass	4♦
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♠
Pass	7♥	All pass	

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

Bidding tip

South’s 4♦ is a control-showing cue-bid. Nowadays, many players are willing to make a cue-bid on either the ace or the king (a method introduced by the great Italian Blue Team, many years ago). Apart from showing a control, a cue-bid often carries a second meaning, namely that you are interested in a slam. When these messages conflict – you hold a control but do not have extra values to suggest a slam – a dilemma arises. Should you cue-bid or not?

When partner’s hand is unlimited, a popular agreement is that you should always cue-bid an ace when this can be done without raising the level of the contract. When your hand is not strong, you can decline to cue-bid a king. On that basis South’s 4♦ here did not promise any extra values.

SOLUTION 99

♠ 7
♥ A K 10 3
♦ 9 5
♣ A K Q 9 6 3

♠ K J 10 8 4 3
♥ 8
♦ K Q 8
♣ J 10 4

♠ Q 5 2
♥ J 6 5 2
♦ 7 4 2
♣ 8 5

♠ A 9 6
♥ Q 9 7 4
♦ A 10 6 3
♣ 7 2

Diagram illustrating a bridge hand layout. The cards are arranged in four columns around a central square table. The table has four corners labeled N (North), S (South), E (East), and W (West). The cards are as follows:

- Top (North): ♠ 7, ♥ A K 10 3, ♦ 9 5, ♣ A K Q 9 6 3
- Left (West): ♠ K J 10 8 4 3, ♥ 8, ♦ K Q 8, ♣ J 10 4
- Right (East): ♠ Q 5 2, ♥ J 6 5 2, ♦ 7 4 2, ♣ 8 5
- Bottom (South): ♠ A 9 6, ♥ Q 9 7 4, ♦ A 10 6 3, ♣ 7 2

West, who overcalled 1♠ after a start of 1♣ – 1♥, leads the ♦K against your grand slam in hearts. How will you play the contract?

You win with the $\heartsuit A$ and see that East is more likely than West to hold $\heartsuit J-x-x-x$. That's because West has longer spades. You play the $\heartsuit A-K$ and West does indeed show out on the second round. How will you continue?

Six clubs, four trump tricks and two outside aces will bring your total to twelve. To make the grand slam, you need to add a spade ruff. You cross to your hand with the ♠A and ruff a spade in dummy. You must take this ruff with the ♥10. The way is then clear for you to lead the ♥3 to your ♥9, taking the marked finesse. You draw East's last trump with the ♥Q, discarding the remaining diamond from dummy. When clubs break 3-2, the dummy is high and the grand slam is yours.

If you failed to ruff with the ♥10, East would refuse to cover when you subsequently led the bare ♥10 from dummy. You would then have no entry to your hand to draw East's last trump.

Point to remember

Unblocking cards in a side suit is a familiar concept. The technique can be just as valuable in the trump suit. Suppose dummy's trumps are ♠A-K-Q-5 while you hold ♠J-10-7-2 in your hand. If the defenders force you to take an early ruff in the dummy, it might be a good idea to employ the ♠Q. Against a 4-1 break, you could then draw trumps with the ace, king, jack and ten.

PROBLEM 100

♠ Q 7 2
♥ 8 5
♦ A K Q 7 5 3
♣ 10 6

♠ 3 led

N
W E
S

♠ A K J 10 9 6 5
♥ A 10 4
♦ 2
♣ A J

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	5NT
Pass	7♠	All pass	

South’s 4NT was Roman Key-card Blackwood, the response showing the missing ace. South’s 5NT asked for side-suit kings but also confirmed that all six key-cards were present. (His own trumps were so long that he was not concerned whether North held the ♠Q.)

Knowing that South must hold very long spades, since he had not asked about the trump queen, North now judged that his source of tricks in diamonds justified leaping to 7♠. How would you play the grand slam when West leads the ♠3, East discarding the ♣2?

Bidding tip

When a player knows that there are three or fewer trumps missing, he is entitled to pretend that he holds the queen of trumps. This happens most frequently when one player uses Roman Key-card Blackwood to ask: ‘Do you have the trump queen?’ His partner, holding extra trump length but not the queen, replies ‘Yes.’

On the auction above it was the Blackwood bidder who pretended that he had the queen of trumps. (His 5NT bid implied that all six key-cards – the four aces and the king-queen of trumps – were present.)

SOLUTION 100

♠ Q 7 2
 ♥ 8 5
 ♦ A K Q 7 5 3
 ♣ 10 6

♠ 8 4 3
 ♥ K J 9 6 2
 ♦ 6
 ♣ K 9 7 3

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

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

N
 W E
 S

West leads the $\spadesuit 3$ against $7\spadesuit$. East throws the $\clubsuit 2$ and you win with the $\spadesuit 5$. You pause to make a plan. Too late! You will go down against best defense.

To discard two hearts and a club from your hand, you need to establish dummy's diamond suit. If diamonds break 5-1, this will require two ruffs and you will need two trump entries to the dummy.

At Trick 1 you win with the ♠9. You cross to the ♦A and ruff a diamond with the ♠10, West showing out. Next you lead the ♠5 and take the marked finesse of the ♠7. After ruffing another diamond high, you return to dummy with the ♠Q and throw three losers on the ♦K-Q-7. The grand slam is yours.

Do you see what can go wrong if you win the first trick with the ♠5? After ruffing a diamond with the ♠9, this will be the position:

♠ Q 7
 ♥ 8 5
 ♦ K Q 7 5
 ♣ 10 6

♠ 8 4
 ♥ K J 9 6
 ♦ —
 ♣ K 9 7 3

♠ —
 ♥ Q 7 3
 ♦ J 10 9
 ♣ Q 8 5 4

♠ A K J 10 6
 ♥ A 10 4
 ♦ —
 ♣ A J

N
 W E
 S

You lead the ♠6, intending to finesse the ♠7 and West performs some magic of his own – he inserts the ♠8! You have to win with the ♠Q and the ♠7 is no longer an entry. This is why you need to keep the ♠6 and the ♠5.

So... what next?

One way or another, you have managed to reach the end of the book. Brilliant! How did you find the level of difficulty? Too easy, did you say? You have no need to worry, then – there is a promising bridge career ahead of you. It's more likely that you solved a good number of the problems but found some of the others a bit tricky. In that case you are the type of player who can gain most from a book of this sort. By studying the solutions and the logic behind them, you can add new techniques and styles of play to your repertoire; they will prove useful time and again.

Next time you visit your local club or sit down for a game against your friends, treat every contract as if it were a problem from this book. Evaluate your prospects and look for the best possible plan before you play the first card from dummy. As more evidence comes to light during the hand, be willing to adjust your plan. It requires some discipline, yes, but the results will be worthwhile, beyond your expectations. Don't believe anyone who says: 'It makes little difference to me whether I do well or not. I just like to enjoy the game.' I like to play well; you like to play well. If we can win an event or two occasionally, at whatever level we play, so much the better!

David Bird

FINE TUNE YOUR CARDPLAY

This collection of 100 problems features instructive deals that have appeared in David Bird's bridge columns over the past few years. The author has aimed to present problems that will give you a good chance of finding the solution. They illustrate a wide range of card-play techniques.

Each problem is presented in two-hand format on a right-hand page, with the solution and full deal overleaf. In addition, you will find a large number of 'Bidding Tips' and 'Points to Remember'. If you fail to solve a problem the first time, this is no cause for concern. By reading the solution and clearly written explanation, you will have a greater chance of handling a similar situation the next time you meet it at the table.



DAVID BIRD (Southampton, UK) is the world's most prolific bridge writer, with more than 125 books to his name. David has regular columns in the *London Evening Standard*, the *ACBL Bridge Bulletin*, *BRIDGE Magazine*, *English Bridge* and other periodicals around the world. He is married with a daughter, a son and two grandchildren.

