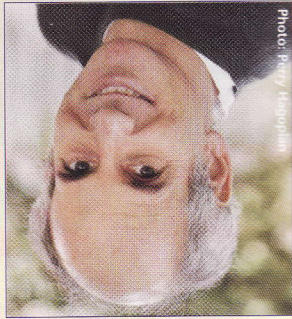


The Two-minute Interview



Louis Sachar

International best-selling writer Louis Sachar is best known for being the author of global blockbuster *Holes*. The novel has won several awards and was made into a film in 2003.

How did you start playing bridge?

I learned to play bridge when I was very young by watching my parents play. I don't remember if I actually had any lessons, but I was fascinated by the game, and occasionally they'd let me sit in on a hand. I also learned by using AutoBridge. I stopped playing once I became a teenager. Nobody I knew played. Decades passed. I got serious about chess, and would play in chess tournaments. I'd read the chess column in the newspaper. Then in 1991 I moved from San Francisco to Austin, Texas. There was no chess column, so I started reading the bridge column, and my interest in the game returned. Shortly thereafter I met a duplicate player who asked if I wanted to give it a try. I scoffed when she mentioned that there was a game every day, and we could play several times a week. Once a week seemed more than enough, thank you very much. I now play four times a week, sometimes more.

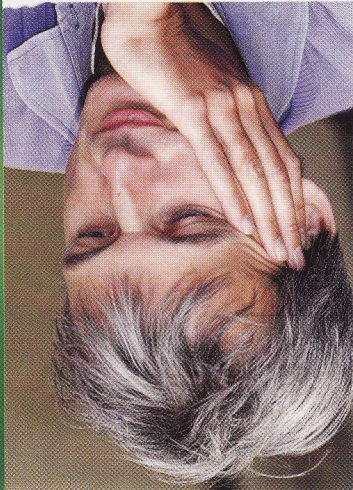
What does bridge mean to you?

I think one of the reasons I became a writer is because I'm not all that adept at most social situations. I'm no good at small talk. I don't like it. The communication in bridge is essential, but minimalist, where you and your partner exchange ideas succinctly, without a whole lot of unnecessary words, yet there is true delight when your thoughts and efforts are perfectly coordinated.

What are your plans for this year?

I'm currently working on a novel that is very much about bridge, although that's all I can say about it for now. If I can pull it off, I hope it will not only be enjoyed by a wide variety of readers, but will also cause a new group of young people to become interested in the game.

# Support at once to the limit in competitive auctions



Andrew Robson

PAIRS TACTICS

IN fit auctions, the side that makes the fewest bids tends to win. Why? Because it is the other side that then makes the last guess – often fatally. Take this deal from a recent duplicate at my club. Before you look, you hold (East's cards):

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

Partner overcalls 1♥ over your left-hand opponent's 1♦ and right-hand opponent passes. Which route would you choose? (A) Bid 2♥, then let the opponents declare at the three-level. (B) Bid 2♥, then bid 3♥ if the opponents compete to the three-level. (C) Bid 3♥.

Game All, Dealer South.

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

Table 1:

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

Table 2:

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

Table Two's East showed us the way it should be done, immediately bidding to the level at which he was prepared to bid – the level of the fit (5 + 4 cards = 9 tricks). South's 4♣ bid was normal – if losing. The contract drifted down one, with East overruffing dummy in diamonds. North-South minus 100.

Back to the question I posed: which route to take as East. I'd award the marks (C) 10 – the success of this action, immediately bidding to the level of the fit then shutting up, is seen at the table. (A) I would give 6: conservative, but acceptable. (B), however, gets no marks, the lesson of this issue.

Andrew's Tip: Make just one supporting bid in a competitive auction – to the limit. Then shut up.

# Splinter bids

OUR second convention is a tool which allows for greater accuracy when judging whether to bid towards slam with minimal values. When seeking to bid low point values, it is important to determine whether the partnership's hands are fitting together well. The key to this often lies in the ability to judge whether a player's short suit holdings are going to either generate extra tricks by ruffing or reduce the number of losers held in the short suit.

## How can this be achieved?

While it is helpful to count points when supporting partner with a balanced hand, it is usually advisable to be bolder with unbalanced hands. This is especially true when supporting to the game level. For example, partner opens 1♥ and responder holds a hand such as *Hand A*. Without any conventional tools, the responder could either bid 4♥ (leaving partner to guess whether the 4♥ bid is based on high cards or just distributional values), 2♦ (hoping to make a 'Delayed Game Raise' – a treatment which is no longer particularly fashionable), or 4NT Roman Key-Card Blackwood (gambling that the hands will have a play for slam if opener has at least three key cards). However, it would clearly be better to be able to show a hand with the values for game with primary support and a shortage (singleton or void) in clubs – the essence of a Splinter bid.

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

## How can a Splinter be recognised?

Let us first consider Splinter bids by the responder. In this case, a Splinter is defined as a double jump in a new suit. Thus, holding *Hand A*, the responder would bid 4♣ (note: with a singleton spade, the response would be 3♥). Having fully described his hand type and values, he would now expect the opener to judge whether to bid towards slam.

## Can the opener make Splinter bids?

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

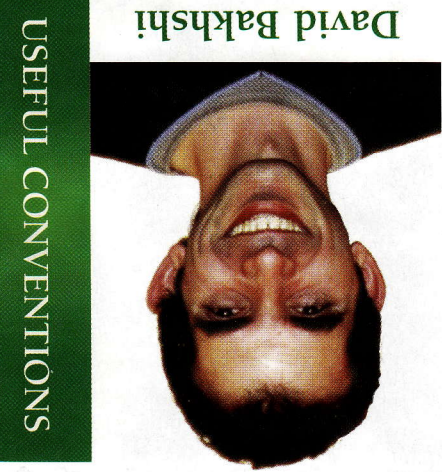
Splinters can also be employed by the opener, and typically involve a double jump in a new suit. Holding *Hand B*, the opener would bid 1♣ and following a 1♥ response could just raise to 4♥. However, it would be better to show a raise with short diamonds, so he rebids 4♦, a double jump in a new suit, allowing responder to assess if the partnership should try for slam.

## Do Splinters always involve a double jump?

While a double jump is often needed when agreeing a suit, *only a single jump is necessary once a suit has been agreed*, i.e. 1♥ – 2♥ – 4♣. Also, it is worth noting that *any jump to the four level should be treated as a Splinter*, e.g. 1♥ – 2♥ – 4♦. This should be logical, as the opener could simply bid 3♦ with a non-minimum hand, and can only afford to go beyond 3NT when confident that the partnership already have a fit. Lastly, *a single jump in an opponent's suit should also be treated as a Splinter*. Again this should make sense, as a principle of Splinters is that the Splinter bid should not take the partnership beyond game, but merely allow partner to decide whether to go that step further.

## How does one evaluate one's hand opposite a Splinter?

When partner makes a Splinter bid, an effective approach is to consider the impact of knowing that partner has at most one card in the suit bid. Thus A-x-x should be considered a very good holding as two potential losers have effectively been reduced to none, while K-Q-x would be a bad holding as there is still one loser and the five points held in that suit could be used more effectively in any of the suits in which the Splinter bidder has length.



David Bakhshi

USEFUL CONVENTIONS

Thus, it is generally the case that one should be encouraged by length and/or possession of the ace in the Splinter suit, while being discouraged by shortage and/or possession of the king, queen and jack in the Splinter suit.

Here is an example of Splinters in action:

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

West	1♦	2♥	4NT <sup>3</sup>	6♥
East	1♥	4♣ <sup>2</sup>	5♥ <sup>1</sup>	All Pass

<sup>1</sup> Not strong enough to Splinter  
<sup>2</sup> Splinter  
<sup>3</sup> Roman Key-Card Blackwood  
<sup>4</sup> Two key cards and the ♠Q

## In summary:

- A Splinter bid typically involves a double jump in a new suit, and shows at least four-card support and values for game, as well as a shortage in the suit bid.
- Only a single jump is necessary once a suit has been agreed, if a double jump would take the partnership beyond game, or when jumping in the opponents' suit.
- When evaluating opposite a Splinter bid, be bold with length and/or the ace of the Splinter suit, but be cautious with shortage and/or the king, queen or jack of the Splinter suit.

# Even a weak hand can have an important part to play in defence

king, he would surely have tried the jack from dummy at trick one. Therefore it looks most likely that partner began with A-10-9-x-x or A-10-9-x. If this is the case, you need to hold on to your hearts.

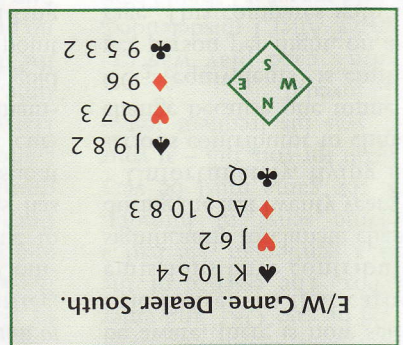
Now let's think about spades. The only time it will cost you to discard a spade is if declarer holds A-Q-x, in which case he has nine tricks, so you can afford to throw one, and partner follows with the king of diamonds.

A second spade discard looks too risky since it will give the contract if declarer began with A-x-x, so you discard a club and declarer also discards a club. Now for the first time we can get a piece of information from partner. He discards the ♣4.

West, your partner, leads the ten of hearts, which is run round to declarer's king. Declarer now runs the jack of diamonds, partner following with the two; he then plays another diamond to the queen, and continues by leading the ace of diamonds. What discard do you make?

Unfortunately you will have to make two discards before you have any help from partner. Let's examine what we know so far.

Starting with hearts, declarer's 2♦ response tells us that partner has four or five hearts. If declarer had the ace as well as the



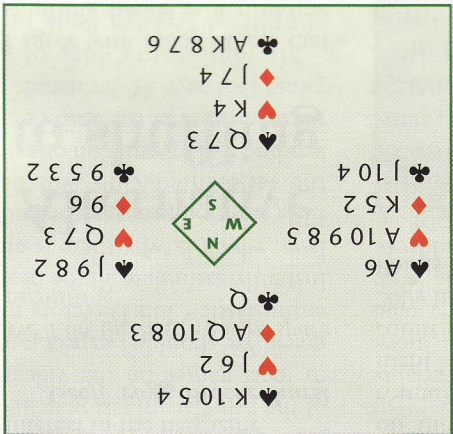
PLAYING teams, South arrives in 3NT having opened INT. North bid Stayman to check for a spade fit, South responded 2♦, and North ended the auction with a jump to 3NT.

So tell me what I am the answer, A riddle where I am the answer, So tell me what I am, sir.

*Fifty-two's your due, not less, not more. Though away go those forever unused. A sideways glance shows a missing four. Come, don't say you're still bemused! Observe that ours are never crossed. Scan the figures till they agree. Discount the two the hard man's lost. Makes forty-two, so plain to see.*

by Mike Chanter (solution on page 36)

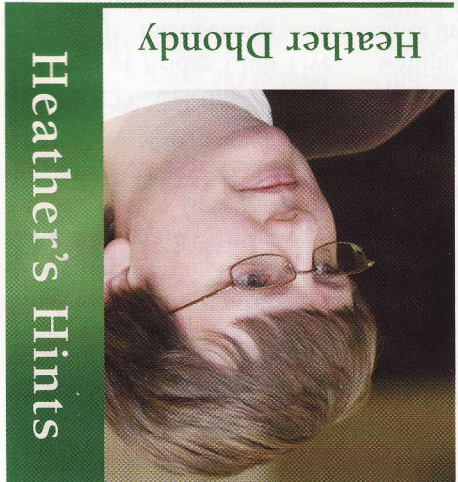
Partner must hold four more hearts and an ace to defeat the contract. Trust him to be helping you out with an attitude card. He must hold the ace of spades and needs you to guard clubs. Discard a second spade. This was the full deal:



Note that declarer cannot unscramble his entries, so he had little legitimate chance for the contract. His best chance was to cash his long suit, and hope the defence discarded wrongly.

- Even a very weak hand can have an important part to play in defence. On this deal you had to defend very thoughtfully to beat the contract.
- When searching for the right discard, go through each suit and work out if there is any lie of the cards where it can cost the contract.
- Look at how declarer has played to your partner's suit at trick one to give you some clues.

## Heather's Hints



Heather's Hints



Andrew Kambites

# When to 'protect' – and how far to go

IN the first article in this series (June 2008) we saw that with balanced hands of up to a poor 15 points you might have no alternative to pass, once your right-hand opponent has opened the bidding. The main natural options available to East in *Auction 1* are shown below:

**Auction 1**

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
	1♥	?	

- 1♠ (one-level overcall) = 8-17 HCP
- 2♣ (two-level overcall without jump) = 10-18 HCP
- Double (take-out) = 11+ HCP
- 1NT = Good 15-18 HCP

Clearly West cannot use the same criteria in *Auction 2*, otherwise both players may pass with 14 balanced points and an easy game is missed. Equally, there are the large numbers of hands where the points in the pack are roughly evenly split between North-South and East-West. I call these '20/20 hands'. Frequently each side can make a part-score in its chosen suit and it simply doesn't pay to sell out to your opponents' choice of one-level contract.

## YOUNG CHELSEA

ONE OF THE WORLD'S  
GREAT BRIDGE CLUBS

Duplicate every weekday evening

☎ 020 7373 1665

www.ycbc.co.uk

**Auction 2**

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
?	1♥	Pass	Pass

This position is called the Protective position because West must 'protect' the possibility that East has been forced to pass with opening values. Bidding with few values is relative safe here: if West has only 8 points then he knows East must have quite a bit, otherwise why are North-South passing out 1♥? West should be looking for reasons to bid, not reasons to pass! On the whole West pretends he has an extra useful king (effectively borrowing it from East) and then chooses his bid. This is called: 'transferring a king'. The bidding criteria for West in *Auction 2* are summarised as follows:

- 1♠ (one-level overcall) = 5-14 HCP
- 2♣ (two-level overcall without jump) = 7-15 HCP
- Double (take-out) = 8+ HCP
- 1NT = 11-14 HCP

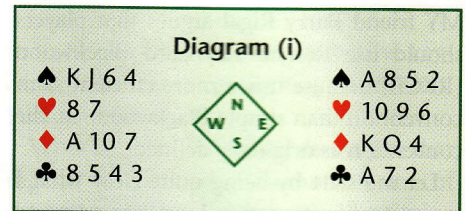
Some bids in fourth position don't quite fit this pattern of bidding with 3 fewer points:

2NT shows a balanced 20-22, because it is not possible otherwise to cater for strong balanced hands too good for a protective 1NT.

2♠, a jump overcall, should be played as 12-16 HCP with a six-card suit, irrespective of what you play immediately over the 1♥ bidder.

Michaels Cue-bids should remain largely unaltered, though there is not much point in bidding on complete rubbish when you can pass the hand out.

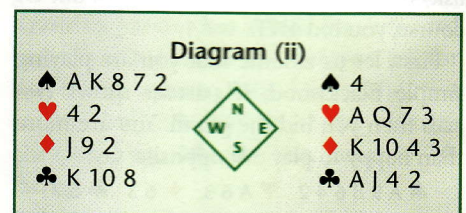
The time for West to pass in *Auction 2* is when he has great length in opener's suit and is worried that if he bids North-South might find a better contract.



**Auction 3**

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
	1♥	Pass	Pass
Dble	Pass	2♠	All Pass

The East-West hands in *Diagram (i)* are bid as shown in *Auction 3*. Of course if West had been next to bid after 1♥ and had doubled in that position, East would be insisting on game, but East is aware that West has added a king to his assets. Therefore East has to correspondingly subtract a king.



**Auction 4**

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
	1♥	Pass	Pass
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

The East-West hands in *Diagram (ii)* are bid as shown in *Auction 4*. East's 1NT might look like a huge underbid, but opposite a standard one-level overcall 1NT shows 9-12 points. If East subtracts a king, then he will need to have started with 12-15 points.

*Remember: West could have protected with 1♠ with as few as 5 points! With 11 points, West makes a game try of 2NT and now East has a comfortable raise to game.*

Entries to Julian Portage, 17 Beach Road, Portcawl CF36 5NH, or e-mail [ebunquizzmaster@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:ebunquizzmaster@tiscali.co.uk). Entries must arrive by February 20. Please indicate on the top left-hand corner of the envelope, or in the e-mail subject line, the category for which you are entering. Julian Portage will judge the entries and the first correct answer drawn in each category will win a prize.

Playing cards now on sale online.  
For more information visit [www.platnik.co.uk](http://www.platnik.co.uk)

# PIATNIK

This twin-pack of playing cards ('Monet Terrace') is the prize on offer in our series of play posers set by Julian Portage.



makers of playing cards since 1824  
[www.platnik.co.uk](http://www.platnik.co.uk)  
☎ 020 8661 8866

# PIATNIK

East's 2♣ is plenty opposite a protective double but with North-South having a heart fit and East-West having a club fit, each side is prepared to push to the three level in competition. The result of all the action following West's protective double is that North has been pushed from a comfortable 1♥ to a 3♥ contract which

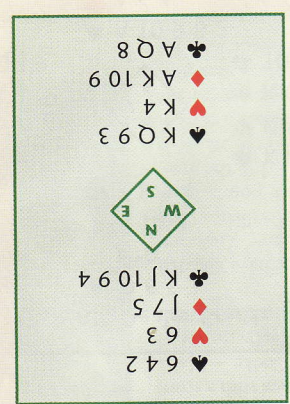
Auction 5

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



Often a protective bid starts a 'scrambling' auction with each side trying to push the other to the three level. For the East-West hands in *Diagram (!!!)* the auction may develop as shown in *Auction 5*:

West leads the jack of spades against 3NT by South (2NT - 3NT). What is the best line for making the contract?



TAKE a look at the play situation below and give your answer. Please include very brief details of your reasoning.

There are three categories in our competition: up to and including Regional Master; and for those with higher ranking. The categories are slightly different to last time; make sure you enter the correct one!

## PRIZE PLAY QUIZ

A competition you can all enter

In *Diagram (iv)* East should be even more desperate to compete after North's second-round pass in *Auction 6*, although the bidding is one level higher. North-South have found a fit, but show no inclination to proceed to game. West doesn't take East's bidding too seriously because East has already passed, hence the quiet 2♥ bid. However, South pushes with 3♥ and, as is often the case, the side with the higher ranking suit wins the auction at the three level.

Auction 6

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



Lords: Lord Skelmersdale (*Captain*) - Lady Openheim-Barnes; Lord Baker - Lord Kalm; Lord Harrison - Lady Billingham; Lord May - Lady Henig.

The Sir Anthony Berry Trophy, awarded each year for the best bridge moment, went jointly to Lord May of Oxford and Lord Harrison. Both executed a strip squeeze and throw-in to perfection to land a 3NT contract in the morning session.

Byoued by a thin game and slam bid and made (uniquely) by the Commons' least experienced pairing (on paper) of Nick Palmer (Lab, Broxtowe) and John Hemming (Lib Dem, Birmingham Yardley), the underdog Commons team leapt to an early lead, preserving it going into the lunch break (never a dry affair). They extended their advantage when Bridget Prentice (Lab, Lewisham East) doubled an opposing 4♥ that was bid to make: down four and a temporary lead of over 2000 points (aggregate scoring). However, barely two minutes later Lady Henig doubled the same 4♥ contract at another table (the four tables played the same boards simultaneously, making gripping view-ing for the assembled press); in desperation, the Commons pair ran from the trying pan to the fire of 5♦, and that went down five (doubled). The Lords were back in the hunt and, with all four Lords pairs producing fine results on the last three deals, they overhauled the Commons to win by a mere 110 points to take the Jack Perry Trophy for a third year in a row. They now lead 18-16 in the overall series.

THE annual Lords v Commons bridge match which took place on 12th December 2008 at London's Crockford's Club saw the closest finish in its thirty-four-years' history. It was a fitting date for the event: twelve years to the day since its original sponsor, Jack Perry, passed away. His son Stephen (head of London Export) now sponsors the contest.

## Lords beat Commons in nail-biter

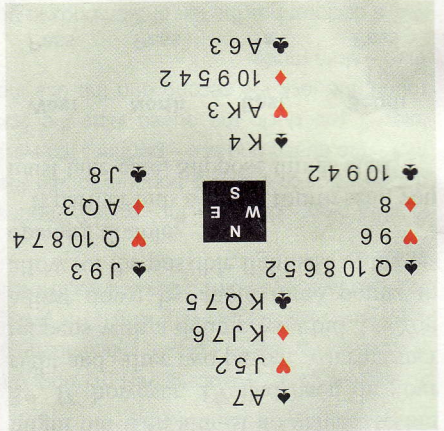
Andrew Robson reports



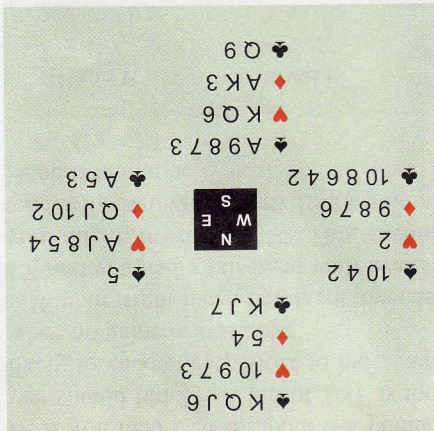
Dave Huggett Says

# Return Partner's Suit

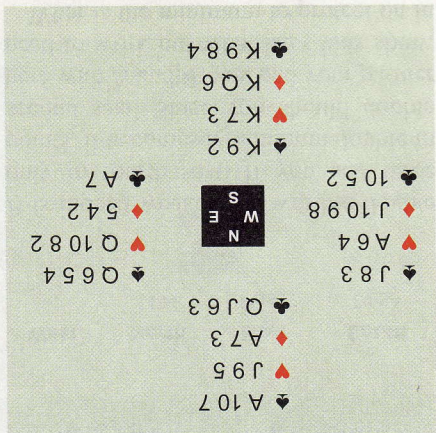
**N**o maxim should be too hard and fast, but the fact remains that you should consider returning partner's suit (i.e. playing back the suit partner led initially) almost all the time. The premise is that the person who leads the suit must have some idea as to how the defence might go. So, unless there is strong contrary evidence, it is as well to go along with it. Take the following deal:



Secondly, declarer probably has only two spades or he would have held up a round. Thirdly, a count of the points (North: 14, East: 10, South 12-14) reveals that West can have no more than four points. With the queen of spades, he cannot have a top heart. So East should return the nine of spades and declarer will have no chance. Returning partner's suit against a suit contract can be a good idea for many reasons. The next deal shows one:



This all tells you the lead just has to be a singleton. So East wins and returns the *lowly four of hearts* to ask for the lower of the other two suits, clubs, to be led when West ruffs. This way, the defenders engineer the first four tricks. It is easy to get too 'busy', to ill effect, when a passive defence would give nothing away. Consider the following:

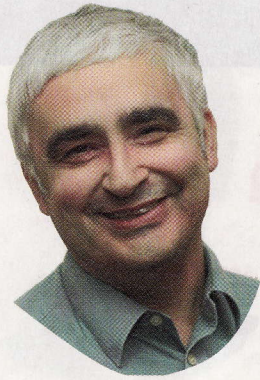


West leads the jack of diamonds, conventionally showing no higher honour. Declarer wins with the king in hand and leads a club to the queen, which East wins with the ace. What should East do now?

Knowing declarer has diamonds well stopped it looks tempting to switch to another suit, but that would be an error. West is marked with very few high cards and a switch, to spades or hearts, could – and does – give away a trick. Although a club return would work, it is better for partnership harmony to return a diamond. Declarer might still make his contract but he does have a number of losing options that he would not have if East had got too 'busy' and not returned his partner's suit. ■

West leads the six of spades, which declarer wins in hand with the king over the jack from East. He then runs the ten of diamonds, which loses to the queen. What should East lead now? It might look rather tempting to return a low heart at this point in the hope that West holds a high honour there. Ideally, West would win, return the suit – and then, when in with the ace of diamonds, East would have a field day. All this is pie in the sky because East knows – or should know – several things. First, West must have the spade queen as the Rule of Eleven tells East that South has only one spade higher than the six, which we know is the king.

The answer lies in examining the lead and trying to understand what possible holdings West could have. He cannot have a doubleton because he would lead high-low from such a holding. Nor can he really have a three-card suit: it would have to be K-Q-2 (I assume declarer plays the six) and, from that holding, the king would be the lead.



# Add Three Points in the Protective Seat

**W**hat do you do with hands A and B if an opponent opens 1♦? A is a take-out double in any seat; B is weaker.

<b>Hand A</b>	<b>Hand B</b>
♠ K Q 7 6	♠ Q J 4 3
♥ K 9 7 6	♥ Q 10 5 4
♦ J 3	♦ 5
♣ A J 5	♣ K J 8 6

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
?	1♦	Pass	Pass

B is indeed weaker and worth a double only in fourth seat. If you add three points, it becomes a minimum double in second seat. Since you should double here with A and B, you and your partner need to work out what later bids show.

What is the minimum to protect on in fourth seat? Many players use the principle of the "transferred king." What this means is that they will bid on a king less than they would in second seat and expect partner to adjust accordingly.

<b>Hand C</b>	<b>Hand D</b>
♠ 5 4	♠ 5 4
♥ K J 9 7	♥ K J 9 7
♦ Q 10 4 3	♦ A J 7 6
♣ Q 9 8	♣ Q 9 8

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
?	1♥	Dbl	Pass

You may prefer 1NT on C to 2♦ because of the heart holding. Partner will expect about 6-9 points for this bid. If you made the hand a bit stronger, as in D, you would be too strong to bid 1NT. You would bid 2NT, showing about 10-12.

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
Pass	Pass	Dbl	1♥
?			Pass

Now partner may have a good hand but you have to cater for him to hold a shapely nine count. This means you must adjust your actions. 1NT after partner's protective double might show about 9-12 points, about 3 points stronger than before. A typical example might be hand D. If you held C with about 6-8 points, you should bid 2♦. A bid of 1NT is too likely to encourage partner to bid again when no game is available.

If your right-hand opponent opened 1♥ and you had a fair hand with hearts, you might overcall 1NT. This would tend to be strong, perhaps 15-18 points. Hand E would be typical.

<b>Hand E</b>	<b>Hand F</b>
♠ K 7	♠ K 7
♥ K J 8 5	♥ Q J 9 7
♦ A Q 4 3	♦ K 9 7 5
♣ K 8 6	♣ K 8 6

Now suppose the auction went:

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
	1♥	Pass	Pass
			1NT

Most people play this 1NT bid as a weaker hand (say 12-14 points) such as F.

If you held hand E, you would be too strong to bid 1NT in fourth seat and would double first.

Partner has to allow for this and should have about three points more to invite game than he would need if you had overcalled 1NT in second seat.

The same rule applies when your side's bid is in a suit after the double. Suppose the auction starts like this:

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
?	1♥	Dbl	Pass

♠ K J 7	
♥ 5 4	
♦ A J 9 7 5	
♣ Q 9 8	



You are too good for 2♦, which you might bid with almost no values, so bid 3♦. If, however, 1♥ had been on your right and, after two passes, your partner reopens with a double, you bid 2♦. You adjust down by about three points to allow for the possible lightness of the re-opening double.

If partner bids a suit in fourth seat, you must take care. Suppose things start:

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
Pass	Pass	1♠	1♥
?			Pass

<b>Hand G</b>	<b>Hand H</b>
♠ 5 4	♠ A Q 8 7 6
♥ K J 9 7	♥ 6 5
♦ K 4 3	♦ Q 7 2
♣ A K 8 3	♣ 10 9 4

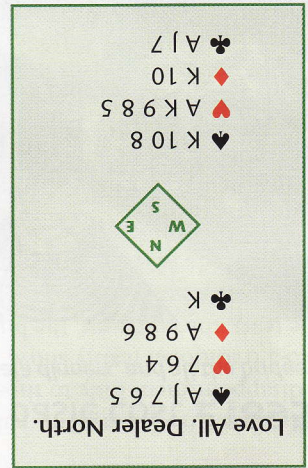
With G, you passed over 1♥ as you were too weak to bid 1NT. Partner has now protected so what do you do? Of course, he might hold a hand on which he would bid 1♠ in any position. Such a hand would make game likely opposite yours. Then again, he might have hand H.

As you do not want to be in game on these hands, mentally deduct about three points to allow for the protection and bid 2NT. Those who call 3NT are likely to end up (i) disappointed and (ii) with a minus score. ■

# Leave two-way guesses to the last possible moment

defenders follow, then ace of clubs and produce the jack from West on the third round, but the queen is still out. This means that you will need to find the queen of spades.

This is the position you have reached:



Playing teams, North opens 1♥. What call do you make with the South cards?

You are strong enough to force; however,

with only a moderate suit, and no primary fit for partner, it is better to start with 2♥.

North raises to 3♥, and you try Roman

Key-Card Blackwood. North responds 5♥,

showing two key cards but denying the

queen of trumps, and you bid 6♥ which

becomes the final contract.

The lead is the ten of clubs. How do you

plan the play?

You will need the trumps to break, and

in addition will need to ruff down the

queen and jack of diamonds in three

rounds, or guess the spades. Begin by

cashing two top trumps, on which both

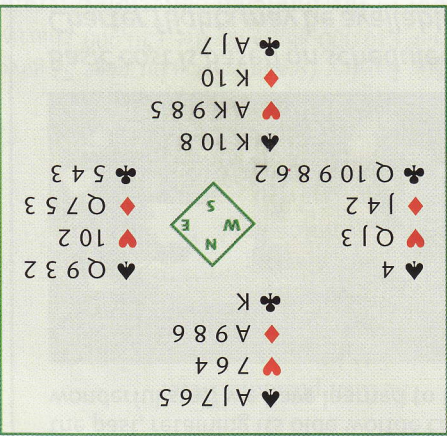
diamonds. Therefore he has at most one club, three trumps, and three or four You now know that West started with six spade. It's time to count West's hand.

another club, on which East discards a a trump now. West wins and plays back of the hand. Therefore you should exit with leave your decision until the last possible Good technique in these situations is to



spade. You can therefore guarantee your contract now by playing a spade to the ace and finessing the ten.

This was the full deal:



Note that by leading your trump you enabled yourself to receive a very important piece of information. Until that point you did not know about the club distribution, but West was forced to reveal that to you, or open up the spades, which would have been even worse for him. This was the key to removing the guess in spades.

## Heather's Hints

- Where you have two chances – ruffing a suit good or taking a finesse – try ruffing your suit good first. If that doesn't work, you can go back to the finesse; if the finesse fails, you will be down before you have tried the other option.
- If you have a two-way guess to pick up a suit, leave it until the last possible moment. You may get a better count of the hand.

**BRIDGE4US** : Friendly Bridge Holidays with John Taylor & Roger Chappel (4 The Green Brafferton Darlington DL1 3LB)

**2009 PROGRAMME (3 nights)**

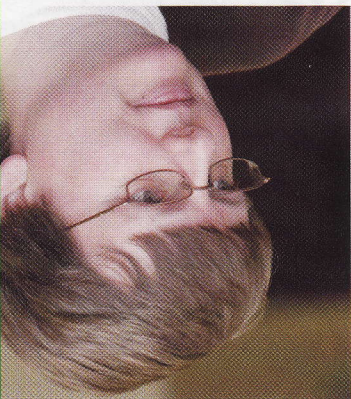
June 2nd – 5th The Raven Hall, Ravenscar £249  
 July 17th – 20th The Esplanade, Scarborough £219  
 Sept 18th – 21st The Scarisbrick, Southport £219  
 Nov 6th – 9th The New Bath, Mallock £219

**Why not join us for a luxury CHRISTMAS break (3 nights) at the RAVEN HALL HOTEL, Ravenscar**

December 27th – 30th (£289)\*

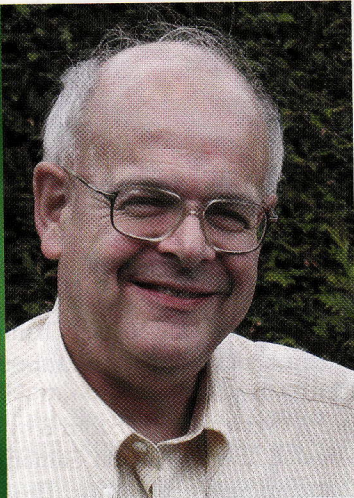
You can also e-mail us at: [bridge4us@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:bridge4us@tiscali.co.uk)  
 Or visit our website: [www.bridge4us.co.uk](http://www.bridge4us.co.uk)  
 Tel : 01325 315741 or 0161 7245670

\* **Claim 10% DISCOUNT if booked before June 30th**  
 All holidays Dinner, Bed & Breakfast



Heather Dhondy





Andrew Kambites

# Total trumps equal total tricks

IN my last article I demonstrated how the law of Total Tricks (LTT) can aid competitive bidding. The LTT states that TOTAL TRICKS available to the two sides will tend to equal TOTAL TRUMPS held by both sides. Hence, if North/South hold nine spades and East/West hold ten hearts (19 total trumps), this suggests either 4♠ will make and 4♥ is one off (19 total tricks) or 4♥ will make with 4♠ one off (also 19 total tricks). I start this article by looking at a typical high level decision.

## A typical high-level decision

How should South bid Hand A at Love All after the bidding in Auction 1?

<b>Hand A</b>
♠ K J 8 7
♥ 9 4 2
♦ 6 3
♣ A J 9 8

### Auction 1

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	4♥	?

Let us consider total trumps. North-South have at least nine spades, possibly ten. How about East-West? They have bid to 4♥ with only about half the high cards in the pack. West probably has a near minimum opening with five hearts: East certainly has four hearts, possibly five. Let us take a conservative view that each side has nine cards in its fit, making 18 total trumps. This suggests 18 total tricks. How does this break down?

- If East-West can make 4♥ (10 tricks)

and North-South are two off in 4♠, provided the opposition doubles bidding 4♠ turns -420 into -300. Of course we all know they don't always double, indeed sometimes they bid on to 5♥ which gives a major gain.

- If North-South can make 4♠ (10 tricks) while East-West were two off in 4♥ (8 tricks), then bidding 4♠ turns +100 (surely South was not going to double 4♥) into +420.
- If both 4♥ and 4♠ were due to fail by one trick, then bidding 4♠ turns +50 into -50.
- This analysis suggests it is clearly right for South to compete to 4♠. Of course sometimes there will be 19 total tricks, when either 4♥ or 4♠ will make and the other one will be just one off, making bidding 4♠ even more clear-cut.
- If this thought process seems complicated, the good news is that the LTT lends itself to easy shortcuts:

**Firstly, assume the opponents have a fit similar to you. If you have a nine-card fit, assume they also have a nine-card fit. Secondly, at game level, if the total trumps suggest that the worst that can happen is that their game and your game both go one off, then generally you should bid your game over their game.**

However, be wary of the five level. To bid 5♠ over their 5♥ you need at least 20 total trumps. The saying that 'The five level belongs to the opposition' is well founded. Suppose your opponents bid to 4♥ and your partner bids a risky 4♠. His enterprise is well rewarded when they compete to 5♥. He has pushed them from an easy 4♥ into a dubious 5♥. Don't undo all his good work by sacrificing in 5♠. I

feel that if I have succeeded in pushing the opponents one level higher than they want to be, I have done enough.

## Enter the Unassuming Cue-bid

In the previous example your opponents had found their fit and you had to decide whether to compete. How should East bid Hands B and C if the auction begins as in Auction 2? Vulnerability shouldn't matter greatly.

Hand B	Hand C
♠ K J 6 5 4	♠ K J 6 5
♥ 8	♥ 8
♦ J 10 9 8	♦ J 10 9 8
♣ 8 6 5	♣ 8 6 5 2

### Auction 2

West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	?	1♥

In the previous article I ended with the advice: with 20/20 hands, try to bid to the level equal to the number of trumps held by your side. This advice doesn't only apply to lower level contracts, and generally it pays to push the bidding up before your opponents find their fit. These look like 20/20 hands in that it is likely that each side holds roughly half of the points.

With Hand B you hold at least ten spades so a pre-empt to 4♠ is correct. With Hand C you have at least nine spades, so a pre-empt to 3♠ is correct. Partner is expected to pass whatever he has. If he has a minimum 1♠ overall 3♠ will fail, but North-South can clearly make 4♥. If he has a maximum 1♠ overall, 3♠ will probably make.

However, clearly you cannot use 3♠ as a pre-empt and a game try, so we now see a typical conventional idea that frees up the 3♠ bid for 'total' tricks' purposes.

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

Auction 3

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

In this layout, East has a genuine game try in spades. He starts by bidding 2♥, the opponents' suit, called an 'unassuming Cue-bid'. West initially declines the game try but when East makes another attempt by raising to 3♥, West reasons that he could be weaker and raises to 4♥.

**In case you were wondering . . .**

Earlier in this article I suggested that you should assume the opponents have a fit similar to you. This is not hard to justify. Suppose your side has eight hearts. Your opponents have five hearts and therefore, 21 other cards. Unless they have exactly three seven-card fits, they must have an eight-card fit. Suppose your side have nine hearts. Your opponents have four hearts and therefore, 22 other cards. They are mathematically certain to hold an eight-card fit. In practice they usually hold a nine-card fit.

**Guidance for 20/20 hands**

Returning to part-score hands, I will try to give you some easy-to-use guidance for 20/20 hands, although this will need to be interpreted in the light of the next article which will cover offensive and defensive values.

- It is almost always correct to bid on if the LTT suggests both contracts might make.
- It is often correct to bid on if the LTT suggests that one contract might make and the other be one off.
- It is usually wrong to bid on if the LTT suggests that both contracts might be one off.
- With 16 trumps it is always correct to bid 2♥ over 2♠.
- With 17 trumps it is always correct to bid 3♥ over 2♥.
- With 16 trumps it is usually unsound to bid 3♥ over 3♠. Note that this last point differs from your strategy at game level.
- With 16 trumps bid 3♥ over 2♥ unless you are vulnerable and have good reason to fear a double.

- To summarise:
1. Try to bid to the level equal to the number of trumps held by your side.
  2. Try not to let your opponents play at a level equal to their number of trumps.

**Bridge Club Live**  
fast, fun and friendly online bridge  
www.bridgeclublive.com



OUR bridge club is open seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year. Apart from the hundreds of thousands of boards played, we have on-going debates on our largely self-regulated CB (Comment Board). The topics cover anything from bridge and our club, to matters of world politics, TV soaps, humour and occasionally important issues such as the rising cost of Catsan or the validity of Twitter (yes, these are serious matters). Often the threads focus on a new or on-going feature within the bridge software or competition activity of the club and the members' contributions provide important development feedback.

From time to time, a debate 'overheats' and personalities nip at each other's heels – usually to the amusement of on-lookers but sometimes to a level where the unsuspecting could be forgiven for assuming our CB is a

OUR bridge club is open seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year. Apart from the hundreds of thousands of boards played, we have on-going debates on our largely self-regulated CB (Comment Board). The topics cover anything from bridge and our club, to matters of world politics, TV soaps, humour and occasionally important issues such as the rising cost of Catsan or the validity of Twitter (yes, these are serious matters). Often the threads focus on a new or on-going feature within the bridge software or competition activity of the club and the members' contributions provide important development feedback.

From time to time, a debate 'overheats' and personalities nip at each other's heels – usually to the amusement of on-lookers but sometimes to a level where the unsuspecting could be forgiven for assuming our CB is a

**Sponsored by Bridge & Golf Gifts Direct**



postal address!  
2009. Don't forget to include your full  
elena@ebu.co.uk not later than 20th June

THE winner of our April competition, with the caption in the cartoon box above, is Micky Morris of Chelmer Village, Essex, who will receive a charming Victoriana bridge mug from our sponsors, Bridge and Golf Gifts Direct (see page 7). Other good captions came from Joy Stuart (a first-year bridge student) from Gerrards Cross (I'm sorry, m'lud, I'm new to the game. I forgot about the weakness takeover!), David Bowers (so you're the man who opened TNT with only 11 points!), and Allan Greenstein, Westcliffe-on-Sea, Essex (For the last time, did you or did you not fail to alert a penalty double?).

The cartoon for our new competition is below. Please send your bridge captions (multiple entries are accepted) to the Editor, *English Bridge*, 23 Erleigh Road, Reading RG1 5LR or by e-mail to elena@ebu.co.uk not later than 20th June 2009. Don't forget to include your full postal address!



But I had to double,  
Your Honour, I had  
an opening hand!

**CAPTION COMPETITION**

# Responding to a Weak Two opening

LAST time I described Weak Two opening bids. Here is the summary:

- Playing Weak Twos an opening bid of 2♦, 2♥ or 2♥ shows:
- A suit of six cards headed by at least one top honour card.
- A hand without four cards in any unbid major.
- A hand of 6-10 points, not worth a one-level opening.
- In fourth seat, 2♦, 2♥, 2♥ are Strong not Weak Twos.

An opening bid of 2♣ is always game forcing (except the sequence 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT).

## Responding to a Weak Two opening

Often when partner opens a Weak Two you will pass. You don't have to bid just because you don't like partner's suit. If partner opens 2♥, on this hand you should pass. Your diamonds may be better than partner's hearts, but to bid 3♦ would be forcing and you don't want to go to game. But what if partner opens 2♥? Now you do want to bid because you have a good fit with partner. You might just bid 3♥ but I would go to 4♥. Perhaps it will keep the opponents out of a making game or maybe 4♥ will make. Either way it's a winning bid.

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

Your partner opens a weak 2♥, the next hand passes; what do you respond? Don't count your points; look instead at your playing strength. Just bid 4♥. Game won't always make if your side has to lose a

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

diamond and three black cards, but it often will. And if it doesn't make, it is likely that your opponents can make a contract, quite possibly a game, so 4♥ is a two-way bid: it may make life difficult for your opponents or it may get your side to a good game.

When your hand is weak, you would like to make life more difficult for opponents, but vulnerable you may be nervous of jumping to game. If partner opens 2♥, and the next player passes, a bid of 3♥ is an attempt to disrupt the auction. Fourth hand now has to decide if his side should be playing at the four level.

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

## The 2NT reply and subsequent development

What should you do with a serious game or slam try? The response of 2NT is used as an asking bid. Some players like to use conventional responses to 2NT, but in Standard English we use fairly simple replies, which are helpful and easier to remember. Say you open 2♥, partner bids 2NT. Your replies:

- 3♥ Rebid your suit to decline the game try.
- 3♣ / 3♦ / Show a useful holding in the suit and a maximum hand.
- 3NT Shows a solid or nearly solid suit, say ♥A-K-Q-x-x-x, ♥A-K-J-x-x-x or ♥A-Q-J-10-x-x. Partner's values will be outside spades, but 3NT may be the best contract, with the lead coming up to partner's hand.
- 4♥ Shows a maximum, good spades and a shapely hand.

### Examples

Decide how the bidding should go before you look at my comments.



Sandra Landy

STANDARD ENGLISH

Game All. Dealer West.

♥ 6 5  
 ♠ K 10 4  
 ♦ A K  
 ♣ Q 8 4 3

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

West opens a Weak 2♦. If East-West have six diamond tricks, East's hand is likely to produce three more, so East should bid 3NT. Nine tricks make easily on a spade lead for +600; 2♦/3♦ scores only +110.

Love All. Dealer East.

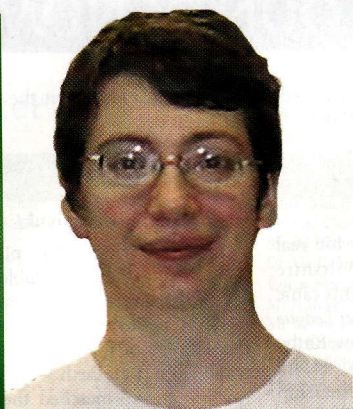
♥ A K 9 8 4 2  
 ♠ 5 3  
 ♦ A Q 8 6 4 2  
 ♣ 9 5

♥ A K Q  
 ♠ 9 5  
 ♦ 9 5  
 ♣ A 6 5

East has a maximum 2♥ opening, so when West enquires with 2NT, East rebids 3♣. West uses Blackwood to check on aces and when East shows two, he bids 6♥ which makes twelve tricks if the heart finesse loses.

### Summary of Responses:

- Pass May be quite strong in terms of points but no fit.
- Raise to 3 Not forcing, pre-emptive. Strong or shut-out. Encouraging at the two-level, game forcing if at a higher level.
- 2NT Forcing enquiry, asking about strength
- 3NT To play; opener must pass.
- 4NT As you normally play.



Frances Hinden

# Defending against artificial systems

## Part II

IN April I looked at how to bid when your right-hand opponent (RHO) opens with an artificial pre-empt. I recommended playing much the same defence whatever the opening:

- Even if the opening bid has both strong and weak options, always assume a weak hand until proven otherwise.
- Suit and no-trump overcalls are usually natural and constructive.
- If opener's potential long suit is known, bid as if he has pre-empted in that suit. Double is take-out of the implied suit, while pass followed by a double shows a relatively balanced hand.
- If you don't know opener's long suit, double shows a balanced hand, while pass then double is take-out.

In this article I give some suggestions on how to continue the auction. In general, try to use the same methods as after a natural pre-empt. For example, if you play Lebensohl after a take-out double of a weak two, it is still useful after a double of an artificial two.

Unfortunately there is an additional complication against an artificial opening. After a natural pre-empt and overcall, you can always bid opener's suit to show a good hand, but how can you cue-bid when you don't know what their suit is? We deal with this using two more general rules:

- If partner doubles an artificial opening and next hand passes, bidding that suit is strong and artificial (you could pass the double with length).
- If the opening bid has two possible weak suits (e.g. the 'Multi'), and partner overcalls naturally in one of them, then a non-jump bid of the other one is a cue-bid. A jump is natural and strong, in case partner has picked off opener's suit.

Finally, one optional extra. After a 'pass or correct' bid by responder, in fourth seat you might have a strong hand with length in the suit just bid on your right. Rather than pass and hope to double later for take-out, you can play double as 'multi-way', i.e. take-out of any one of their possible suits. Opener will have to reveal his suit over the double, and now you both bid on assuming that the double was take-out of opener's suit.

★★★★★

This may sound a little complex, so here are some examples where North opens with an artificial jump, either the Multi 2♦ (weak in one of the majors, or various strong hands), or some other pre-empt.

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

West	North	East	South
	2♦	Dble <sup>1</sup>	Pass
3♦ <sup>2</sup>	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

<sup>1</sup> Balanced (opener's suit is unknown)

<sup>2</sup> A cue-bid, as West would pass with diamonds

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

West	North	East	South
	2NT <sup>1</sup>	3NT <sup>2</sup>	Pass
4NT <sup>3</sup>	Pass	6♣ <sup>4</sup>	All pass

<sup>1</sup> Bad pre-empt in either minor

<sup>2</sup> Likely to make nine tricks

<sup>3</sup> Do you have anything extra?

<sup>4</sup> Yes (might try 6NT at match-points)

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

West	North	East	South
	2♦	2♠	Pass
3♥ <sup>1</sup>	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass <sup>2</sup>	Pass		

<sup>1</sup> A cue-bid, or general force

<sup>2</sup> Delighted (4♠ may go off)

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

West	North	East	South
	3♦ <sup>1</sup>	Pass	3♥
Pass	Pass	Dble <sup>2</sup>	Pass
Pass <sup>3</sup>	Pass		

<sup>1</sup> Weak with long hearts, or strong with spades and clubs

<sup>2</sup> Balanced values

<sup>3</sup> Very happy if North-South are vulnerable

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

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

<sup>1</sup> To play opposite hearts ('pass or correct')

<sup>2</sup> Take-out of spades

<sup>3</sup> Playing Lebensohl, about 8+ points

Next time I shall look at what to do after an artificial one-level opening or response. □



# Nine Tricks are Easier than Eleven

**A**lmost from the moment that we start to play bridge, we become aware that the minor suits are the poor relations. This is for good reason. The difference between making nine tricks (3NT) and eleven tricks (game in a minor) is much greater than the gap between making nine and ten (game in a major). You know also that if you fail to make exactly eleven, then you have either overbid – or underbid! At matchpoints, even if you make 5♣ or 5♦, any pairs who make ten tricks in 3NT outscore you.

While most of us open one of a major with a five-card suit happily, on values within the no-trump range, we would not open 1♣ or 1♦ on such hands with a five-card minor. From the outset, the emphasis is on playing in no-trumps rather than a minor. Take this hand for example:

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

West	East
1NT	3NT

3NT is far from perfect on a spade lead, but it will make any time you do not get a spade lead, any time spades divide 4-4 and often when someone holds ♠A-K-x.

5♦, by contrast, suffers from the indignity of having three top losers no matter what the lead. Note that, if you reverse the red suits (giving East ♥K-Q-J-x-x), you would prefer to play in 4♥, which, barring wild breaks, is virtually laydown. What is more, you would reach 4♥ easily after a 1NT opening: East would show his five-card heart suit with a transfer or by whatever method you employ.

Here is another type of hand that you should treat differently because of the low scoring of the minor suits:

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

West	East
1♦	3♦
3NT	

Playing a weak no-trump, West opens 1♦ and, with an eight-loser hand, East, no doubt, raises to 3♦. I imagine that West will – quite rightly – give little thought to bidding anything other than 3NT, which would be unlucky to fail. 5♦ might make, but would be an inferior contract.

Note that, if the players were playing a strong no-trump, then the bidding would just go 1NT-3NT.

As an aside, there is a difference in the meaning of opener's second bid in the following two auctions:

(a)	(b)
West	West
East	East
1♥	1♦
3♥	3♦
3♠	3♠

In auction a), 3♠ is a cue-bid and is the start of an exploration to see if a slam is possible. This is because, when you have a known eight-card fit in a major, you will not play in some other suit. However, in auction b) 3♠ does not mean that opener has first-round control, nor indeed four spades (because partner has denied holding that suit). It merely shows a stopper in the suit and is looking for partner to bid 3NT. (The opener would, of course, be denying a heart stopper or he would have bid 3♥.)

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

West	East
1♦	3♦
3♣	3NT

Auction b) might continue like this. 3♣ shows a spade stopper and denies a heart stopper. Responder, with a heart stopper, continues with 3NT, reaching the best contract. 3NT is laydown, but 5♦ depends on a finesse. Without a heart stopper, East would rebid 4♦.

There is another type of minor-orientated hand where you need to look for nine tricks rather than eleven. Suppose the deal is as follows with you as West:

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

When your partner (East) opens 1NT (12-14), it would be reasonable to bash 3NT on the basis that the possibility of making a bundle of tricks in clubs will make up for the lack of points. Indeed, on the hand as shown, 3NT is almost impregnable, while 5♣ is hopeless. Of course, West would be happier if he could be sure that his partner 'filled in' the club suit and sophisticated methods can do just that.

On occasion, you should play in five of a minor it is true, but not often and if you gear your bidding towards looking for the no-trump game in these circumstances, you will not go too far wrong. ■

# Quality Counts



**L**ength is strength – true – but it is not the be all and end all. On many hands, suit *quality counts*. The better your suit, the more likely it will make a good trump suit – and the more likely you are to bid it. How do you feel about playing with a six-card ‘fit’? The idea does not appeal, does it? Now suppose I tell you that the six trumps are A-K-Q-J-10-x facing a void. You surely feel differently about that.

You may know that *quality counts* for overcalls and pre-emptive actions. It should also count for other actions. Culbertson made famous the idea of a biddable suit. Yes – ‘some suits are more equal than others’.

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

Hand A: you open 1♦, planning to rebid 2♣. You are happy to play in a minor suit and to let partner, who may have tenaces in the majors, play no-trumps.

Hand B: playing a weak no-trump, you open 1NT. While the shape is the same as in A, the honour location and suit quality is very different. With over half your points in the majors, opening 1NT is a lesser lie than bidding both minors.

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

Some say that, with a four-card major and a four-card minor, you should open the major. I think this is awful.

With a balanced hand (out of range for a 1NT opening), you open one of a suit intending to rebid no-trumps at the appropriate level. If you bid only one suit, make it your best suit. With C, you open 1♠. If you want to open 1♦, you may as well give up playing four-card majors! With D, you open 1♦.

Trying to open one of a major only when you have a good suit is crucial to finding 5-3 fits – if you open on bad suits, partner will hesitate to raise without four trumps. The benefits of opening your better suit include:

- 1 You will find far more good 5-3 fits than you would otherwise.
- 2 If partner is on lead and leads your suit, it is likely to work well.
- 3 If you play in a 4-3 fit, it is likely to be a good one.
- 4 If you miss a 4-4 fit, it is likely to be a bad one.

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

Sometimes you do not even open a five-card major. If the suit is poor, as in E, and you are in range for 1NT, open 1NT. This describes your values and hand type. With F, of course, you open 1♠. You are happy to rebid the spades if need be or for partner to lead the suit or to regard spade length as an asset.

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

What do you rebid on these hands if you open 1♠ and partner responds 2♣? On G, you jump to 3♠, showing the extra values and extra spade length, and ignoring the diamond ‘suit’. As Reese said, ‘don’t bid bad suits on good hands.’ With H, rebid 2♦. You might want to play in diamonds with H or, at any rate, let your partner know that you have the suit well held.

Likewise, if partner opened 1♣, you jump to 2♠ on G but bid a simple 1♠ on H. With G, you know spades is a playable trump suit and that you are most unlikely to belong in diamonds. With H, far more options remain open.

For competitive decisions, the *Rule of Total Tricks* is a good guide. Even so, on many marginal hands, *quality counts*.

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

West	North	East	South
		1♥	Pass
2♥	3♦	Pass	Pass
?			

With J, bid 3♥. Your hand appears useless defensively. If 3♥ goes down, 3♦ is surely making. You will often have a 5-4 fit (or a 4-4 fit in both majors) if partner knows not to rush into opening a poor four-card major.

By contrast, with K, you should pass. Your diamond holding may well be worth a trick against 3♦ but is of dubious value to your partner in 3♥. Moreover, your weak hearts increase the risk of trump losers in 3♥ and increase the chance that your fit is only 4-4. 3♦ and 3♥ are unlikely both to be making. *Quality counts.*



# Count Shape, Points and Tricks

**E**state agents, they say, quote the three key features of a property as location, location and location. At bridge, if you want to defend well, there are three very important things to do – counting, counting and counting. You need to know shape, points and tricks. If you count these things, you will often build up a good picture of the unseen hands. Once you can ‘see’ the unseen hands, you should beat far more contracts.

## Counting Shape

If you are not used to counting, it may seem a bit much suddenly to count three things at once. We will begin by counting shape alone.

♠ 8 7	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 30px; height: 30px; margin: auto;"> <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 8 7 5 3										
♦ K 6 2										
♣ K Q 10										
♠ J 9 4 3 2										
♥ Q 10 4										
♦ Q 10 7										
♣ J 5										

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

You lead the three of spades. East wins with the ace and returns the ten. Taking this with the king, declarer crosses to the king of diamonds and finesses the jack on the way back. East follows both times and you win with the queen.

Diamonds is the easiest suit to count: South’s bidding shows at least five diamonds and four clubs. Since East has followed to two diamonds, the diamond layout must be West three, North three, East two and South five.

You also know the spade layout if you think about it. East would have played back a low card (original fourth best), not the ten, from four. East cannot therefore have more than three spades. Equally, you know that South can have no more than three. With four spades, South would have rebid 1♠, not 2♣. The spades must be West five, North two, East three and South three.

The 2♣ rebid tells you that South has four or five clubs. You cannot say for sure which it is. However, you do know that South started with thirteen cards. So South must be 3-1-5-4 or 3-0-5-5. Either shape is consistent with the bidding and play to date.

## Counting Points

You have six points and can see eleven in dummy. This accounts for seventeen points. Subtracting seventeen from forty tells you that the unseen hands have twenty-three points between them. Since North’s jump preference was not forcing, South must have better than a minimum opening – say fourteen or fifteen points. What do you know about these presumed fourteen or fifteen?

We have already established the spade layout: A-10-x with East and K-Q-x with South – that is five points. We have also established the diamond layout: x-x with East and A-J-x-x-x with South – that is another five points.

This leaves us with the A-J of hearts and the ace of clubs. You cannot place the jack of hearts but you can place East and South each with one of the missing aces. With ten points in diamonds and spades, South needs at least four more to have a minimum of fourteen.

## Counting Tricks

You have made a spade and a diamond. You need three more tricks to set 3NT.

Declarer’s tricks include two in spades (the king-queen) and four in diamonds (a five-card suit with one loser). With the ace of clubs, there would also be at least three club tricks (the ace in hand and the winners in dummy), to bring the total to nine. With the ace of hearts instead, declarer would have only two club tricks after driving out the ace but now two heart tricks (the ace facing the king). Either way, your opponent seems to be on course for nine tricks.

Counting tricks also tells you South cannot be 3-0-5-5. With a heart void, South’s undetermined ace must be in clubs and not hearts. With five club tricks and two tricks in each pointed suit, declarer would have nine on top and not be finessing in diamonds.

In any event, to defeat the contract you will need to make the next three tricks. Slow winners will be no good. This means placing East with the ace of hearts rather than the ace of clubs. Having figured out that you need three quick heart tricks and that South has a singleton, can you see what to do? Lead the queen. This is the full deal:

♠ 8 7	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 30px; height: 30px; margin: auto;"> <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 8 7 5 3										
♦ K 6 2										
♣ K Q 10										
♠ J 9 4 3 2	♠ A 10 5									
♥ Q 10 4	♥ A 9 6 2									
♦ Q 10 7	♦ 8 4									
♣ J 5	♣ 9 8 3 2									
	♠ K Q 6									
	♥ J									
	♦ A J 9 5 3									
	♣ A 7 6 4									

Although the counting process may seem laborious at first, once it becomes a habit, you should find it much easier. The initial effort is well worth it. ■

# Test Your Options in the Right Order



**H**ow do you plan the play in 7♠ on the deal below, to test all your options? West leads the queen of clubs.

1

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

West: ♠ 8 6, ♦ 8 6, ♣ 8 6, ♠ 8 6  
 North: ♠ 4, ♦ 5, ♣ 7  
 East: ♠ 8 6, ♦ 8 6, ♣ 8 6, ♠ 8 6  
 South: ♠ 8 6, ♦ 8 6, ♣ 8 6, ♠ 8 6

West	North	East	South
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥	Pass	7♣
End			

Let's assume trumps divide 2-1. This gives you twelve tricks – five spades, four top tricks in the side suits and three ruffs. What are your options for a thirteenth? Firstly, if the clubs break 4-3, you can establish your fifth club. There is also either red-suit finesse, or ruffing down the king of diamonds. How are we going to maximise our chance of success? The answer is to combine as many of these chances as possible by testing them in the correct order. Since there is no way you will want four ruffs in either hand, you start by drawing trumps. All follow once. West discards a diamond on the second round. Which option do you go for first?

Don't start with a finesse. If it fails, you are down and it will be too late to try any other options. Try ruffing out the clubs. If that fails, you will still have

2

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

West: ♠ 8 6, ♦ 8 6, ♣ 8 6, ♠ 8 6  
 North: ♠ 4, ♦ 5, ♣ 7  
 East: ♠ 8 6, ♦ 8 6, ♣ 8 6, ♠ 8 6  
 South: ♠ 8 6, ♦ 8 6, ♣ 8 6, ♠ 8 6

can be just as important when defending. *Testing your options in the right order* would have failed.

you are home. Note that if, at any stage, you decided to take either finesse, you a third diamond. When the king appears diamond. Ruff a club to dummy and ruff Play the ace of diamonds and ruff a with a final option of the heart finesse. diamonds next, since this leaves you Of course, you should try to set up the king of diamonds ruffs down.

The best combination of chances in the diamonds and, if that fails, take the heart finesse. While that diamond play is not best for the suit itself, it increases your overall chance from 50% – if you finesse in one red suit – to 50% for the heart finesse plus half of the chance that the king of diamonds ruffs down.

Let's consider the diamond suit. In isolation, the finesse is the best option for two tricks in the suit but, if it loses, you won't be able to finesse in hearts.

Remember all your options. You may wish to ruff three diamonds or ruff the suit good. To retain these options, you must throw a heart from dummy. Now ruff the third club – and you discover that they split 5-2. It's time to try another option.

What are you going to discard from other options to which to return.

Finally, if dummy's ace wins and declarer plays a trump to your ace, you will have to find East's entry. Fortunately, by this time, you will have seen the all-important signal on the first diamond. Even if East has K-3, declarer's refusal to finesse may guide you.

Therefore, you should lead the nine of diamonds at trick two because that leaves you both options open.

If you play partner for the ace of clubs, but declarer holds it, he will have several fast tricks in dummy on which to dispose of losers. By contrast, if you play partner for the king of diamonds and declarer has it, you can see that partner will be short enough in the suit to ruff in before declarer can take many discards. You should thus have time to switch tack and play him for the club ace when you are in with your trump.

can happen if you guess wrong? If you play partner for the ace of clubs, but declarer holds it, he will have several fast tricks in dummy on which to dispose of losers. By contrast, if you play partner for the king of diamonds and declarer has it, you can see that partner will be short enough in the suit to ruff in before declarer can take many discards. You should thus have time to switch tack and play him for the club ace when you are in with your trump.

We can work out that if partner holds either the diamond king or the club ace and we guess correctly, we can defeat the contract. So let's approach it from the other angle. What's the worst that can happen if you guess wrong?

Let's start with partner's signal. We would like it to be suit a preference signal, telling us whether he has the king of diamonds or the ace of clubs. However, in practice, it is very likely merely to be encouraging since he will not know that you have led a singleton. Against a pre-empted ace to get a look at dummy. What it does do is confirm that he has only five hearts as he would signalled with the eight or seven if he could. So South is likely to be 7-3-2-1 or 7-3-1-2.

You are West and lead the ace of hearts against South's contract of 4♥. Partner follows with the six and declarer the three. How do you plan the defence?

West	North	East	South
Pass	4♥	Pass	3♣
End			