




"Play the high cards from the short suit first". Simple examples of making sure you don't block suits. Part 2 of 2. ACOL version. Updated spring 2015.

VBY1 #2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

		North		
		♠ T83		
		♥ AK9		
		♦ K932		
		♣ KQ3		
West				East
♠ 754				♠ KQJ6
♥ QT62				♥ J84
♦ Q5				♦ JT84
♣ T942				♣ 75
		South		
		♠ A92		
		♥ 753		
		♦ A76		
		♣ AJ86		

This is our **General Series** of eight deals of varying topics. Well, that's the theory. Here, we are going to have eight deals with a theme, and that theme is **not** tangling suits up.

How can you manage that? Well in the most part it's by **playing the high cards from the short suit first**.

Hand 1 is a gentle warm-up.

There's almost nothing you can do wrong (if you believe that, we've got some used cars to sell you!)

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♥ 2

Bidding.

We have the perfect hand for a 1NT opener: balanced, and with the requisite number of points (13).

Partner does the maths and adds up what he can see (15) to our 12 to 14 and can see that the total is 27 to 29.

That's plenty to raise to 3NT; so partner does precisely that.

Play.

The opening lead of the ♥2 suggests that West is leading from strength in Hearts, and indeed he is. He had a choice of leads but he picked the Hearts because it is customary to lead your longest and strongest suit.

We count the tricks we have off the top; *quick tricks* we can take without giving up the lead. We've got one Spade, two Hearts, two Diamonds, and four Clubs. Very nice. That adds up to the nine we need.

Now, what can go wrong? Nothing much on this hand, if we are a tad careful.

We take the first trick with dummy's ♥K. Our best suit is Clubs so we start on those. However, to make four Club tricks off the reel we need to play the *high Clubs from the short side first* (dummy has fewer Clubs than the closed hand), so we start by cashing the ♣K Q.

By the way... a brief digression. Why not take our ♥A now? The answer is that it doesn't usually make sense to cash all the winners in the suit the opponents led immediately. We save the last Heart winner for later. It's not going to go away, and (while it doesn't matter on this hand) it's good to have a stopper in reserve in the opponents' suit.

So we cash the first four Club tricks uninterrupted. Note what would happen if we started by cashing the ♣A first – the next two Clubs would be won with the ♣Q and ♣K and then the ♣J would be isolated in the South hand. True, that might not matter *on this deal*

but it matters very much in general, and so it is this technique we are emphasising.

Having taken four Club tricks we can then grab the ♦A K and take the ♠A and ♥A for dessert.

No matter what we do, we don't get any more tricks. But we don't need any more, do we?

Lessons learned on this deal. First, when we counted our tricks, we saw we had the nine we needed. There is no reason not to "cut and run". Secondly, we had to play the Clubs the right way, taking the high Clubs in dummy before coming back to hand for the ♣A J. It's good practice to play that way.



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VBY1 #2 General Hands ACOL

Date: 24/03/2016

Dealer: East

[Play this hand online!](#)

Contract: 3N

By: South

Board #: 2

Vulnerable: None

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♣ K

Bidding.

We have a standard 14-point 1NT opener, which partner, with his 12 points and five-card suit, decides to raise to game. (Diamonds, what Diamonds? There's no point in bidding those! As we progress you will learn that minor suits are second-class citizens in bridge).

Play.

West leads the ♣K, which clearly indicates that he started with a long suit headed by the ♣K Q J. (You don't lead fourth-highest when your long suit is headed by a three-card sequence).

When we begin our **Count** and **Plan**, we see two Spade winners, one Heart, five Diamonds and one Club. Fortunately, that totals nine, so we have no need to mess about; we can just go straight for the jugular.


We take the ♣A and start, naturally enough, on our best suit – Diamonds. However, *how should we play the suit?*

If you led the ♦A (or the ♦K or the ♦10) go to the back of the class. You have a 5-3 Diamond split and you need to follow the Golden Rule (which is: *Play the high cards from the short suit first*).

Here, to make five Diamond tricks, we need to cash the ♦Q J first and then play a low Diamond to dummy's ♦A K 10. If we fail to do this we cannot make five tricks in Diamonds.

(If you don't believe us, we suggest you get out a pack of cards and arrange the Diamonds as in the diagram. See what happens if you cash the ♦A first. In short: disaster).

Having taken five Diamond tricks in succession we can easily take the three tricks in Hearts and Spades to make the total up to nine. The rest are scraps; throw them to the dogs.

North		East	
♠ 762		♠ QT	
♥ J52		♥ K986	
♦ AKT42		♦ 98763	
♣ A2		♣ 75	
West		East	
♠ J984		♠ QT	
♥ QT3		♥ K986	
♦		♦ 98763	
♣ KQJ863		♣ 75	
South			
♠ AK53			
♥ A74			
♦ QJ5			
♣ T94			

Now you know what you have to do, you should have no problems on this hand.

Should you?



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VBY1 #2 General Hands ACOL

Date: 24/03/2016

Dealer: South

[Play this hand online!](#)

Contract: 3N

By: South

Board #: 3

Vulnerable: None

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1NT
2♠	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ K

Bidding.

The bidding is a change from normal; usually the opponents are sleeping like Rip Van Winkle. Here, West overcalls our 1NT opener with 2♠. This gives partner a problem but he takes a pot at 3NT. Luckily for him we can stop the run of the Spades.

Play.

West leads the ♠K (the top card from a run) and now the fun begins.

Our **Count** and **Plan** shows we have nine tricks right off the top and we're going to **cut and run**. If we let West on lead he'd make mincemeat of us with those powerful Spades. We must play both Clubs and Hearts with due care and attention, *playing the high cards from the short suit first*. In the case of Clubs that means cashing the ♣A K first; in the case of Hearts that means playing the ♥Q first.

In detail... we win the ♠A, cash the ♣A K and continue with the ♣Q J 10. Now, with only three more tricks to garner, we play off the ♥Q followed by the ♥A K. West can have the rest, East (who has been looking miserable ever since he sorted his collection of tram tickets) can have the blues.

North

♠ 53

♥ AK2

♦ Q8752

♣ AK3

West

♠ KQJT76

♥ JT86

♦ A43

♣



East

♠ 98

♥ 7543

♦ 96

♣ 98762

South

♠ A42

♥ Q9

♦ KJT

♣ QJT54

When you have your tricks all lined up, you need to take them.

On this deal, you'll see the danger of allowing the enemy to gain the lead.



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VBY1 #2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 1N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

West	North	East	South
P	P	P	1NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ K

Bidding.

After three Passes we venture 1NT (13 points and a balanced hand; what else?) and that ends the auction.

Play.

Partner puts down a decent dummy (9 points) but West finds a lead (the ♠K) that takes out the ♠A. Still, North's Diamonds are going to provide just what we need – if we play carefully. Our **Count** shows we have four Diamond tricks to go with the three Aces in our combined hands.

As usual, the order we take the Diamonds in is critical to success. This time, though, there is a twist.

We take the first trick with our ♠A. At trick two, we play our ♦K. At trick three, we play our ♦Q and *overtake* it in dummy with the ♦A. What happens if we don't do this? Well, the ♦A J would be stranded in the dummy and would never take any tricks. They may as well be on the moon.

We take the rest of our Diamonds, and go back to hand and take our Aces. There are no other tricks available, but we take our seven and that's all we need.

We will meet this topic again in a later session when we talk about *entries*.

West	North	East
♠ KQJ9	♠ AT2	♠ 76
♥ Q2	♥ 973	♥ KJ86
♦ 8732	♦ AJT5	♦ 964
♣ JT2	♣ 753	♣ KQ64
	South	
	♠ 8543	
	♥ AT54	
	♦ KQ	
	♣ A98	


Here we are following our theme but we are adding a twist of lemon.

It's easy enough, though.



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VBY1 #2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

		North		
		♠ 964		
		♥ J85		
		♦ KQ63		
		♣ AK8		
West				East
♠ KQJT8				♠ 3
♥ A72				♥ KQ964
♦ 7				♦ T9842
♣ T942				♣ 75
		South		
		♠ A752		
		♥ T3		
		♦ AJ5		
		♣ QJ63		

Here you have an easy nine tricks.

Easy? Well, nothing's ever *that* easy. You just have to play with a little bit of care.

If you understand the theme you won't go wrong.

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ K

Bidding.

We arrive in 3NT by the usual rapid transit route of 1NT – 3NT. Many hands are bid this way at bridge. Fast and efficient.

Play.

West thinks he has found a great lead with the ♠K. We must sympathise with West – if he were to ever regain the lead with the ♥A he'd have enough tricks in Spades to defeat you.

We thank partner for his contribution and study the dummy to **count our tricks**. One Spade, no Hearts, four Diamonds and four Clubs totals nine. So we have our contract in top tricks – it's time to **cut and run**.

Problems? Well, there are always problems... If we tangle up Clubs and (or) Diamonds we'll not make four tricks in those suits. How should we play them?

All together now (and, yes, that includes you at the back of the room...):

Play the high cards from the short suit first.

So we take the ♠A and play off the Diamonds first (true, we could have chosen to play off the Clubs first. Whatever). We take the ♦A J and then the remaining Diamonds before switching to Clubs. Again, we take the ♠A K and then the rest of the Clubs. Game over – let the opponents fight over the remaining crumbs.

Note, as an added extra, that we didn't "butterfly" in playing the hand. By which we mean that we didn't flit from suit to suit (such as cashing the ♠A, then the ♦A then back to the ♠K and so on). We determine which suit we are going to play on and we stick to it.

"If only you'd led Hearts", grumbles East. Yes, indeed. With 20-20 hindsight West could have led a Heart to defeat us. However, he's not psychic and he doesn't peek at our cards.



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VBY1 #2 General Hands ACOL

Date: 24/03/2016

Dealer: East


[Play this hand online!](#)

Contract: 1N

By: South

Board #: 6

Vulnerable: None

		North		
		♠ AQ4		
		♥ K6		
		♦ 8643		
		♣ 9752		
West			East	
♠ J987			♠ T652	
♥ JT98			♥ 7532	
♦ 9			♦ AKQJ	
♣ KQJT			♣ 6	
		South		
		♠ K3		
		♥ AQ4		
		♦ T752		
		♣ A843		

Here you end up in a part-score contract.

These are not always easy to play – certainly not as easy as this one (!)

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ K

Bidding.

We open 1NT and that ends the auction. Partner puts down a healthy enough dummy (9 points) so we happen to have the majority of the high cards. (22 points to 18).

Play.

West starts off with the ♣K (proclaiming to the world that he has a powerful Club sequence) and we pause awhile to think, **count** and **plan**.

We can see three Spade tricks, three Heart tricks and the ♠A so our seven tricks are in sight. The **Plan**? Well, having taken the ♠A we need to cash our tricks rapidly. Further, we must be careful to – wait for it! – *play the high cards from the short suit first*.


So we take our three Spade winners (in the order ♠K, ♠Q, ♠A) and then switch our attention to Hearts. Here we must play off the ♥K first and then come to the closed hand to take the ♥A Q.

That's seven tricks and the remaining rubbish in our combined hands is good for nothing but recycling. Let the opponents have their fun (and the last six tricks).



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VBY1 #2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

		North		
		♠ KJ53		
		♥ J83		
		♦ AKJ7		
		♣ 97		
West		East		
♠ T862		♠ 974		
♥ Q974		♥ KT6		
♦ 8		♦ 6432		
♣ KJ53		♣ AQ4		
		South		
		♠ AQ		
		♥ A52		
		♦ QT95		
		♣ T862		

The emphasis in this set of hands is on **not** tangling suits up so that you end up in the wrong hand at the wrong time.

Some suits, however, are just dealt that way and the whole deal may need careful planning.

[Hands 7 and 8 both fall into this category. You have been warned!]

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♣ 3

Bidding.

We open 1NT as dealer (12 points and a 4-4-3-2 shape) and await partner's reply. With 13 points and a balanced hand North has enough to raise to game, so we reach 3NT in the now customary fashion of 1NT – 3NT.

Play.

West makes a nuisance of himself by leading a Club. (Now that we can see his hand we can see he had a choice of three four-card suits to lead. His selection was the strongest of his three suits).

Even though the opponents are in charge of the field we should still not play a card from the table until we are good and ready. We can make our **Plans** (do our **Counting**) even though we may not be on lead for a while.

Here we can see that we do have nine tricks (four Spades, one Heart, four Diamonds) as and when we get on lead. The Spades are awkward, though, in that we cannot run them off (we cash the ♠A Q and then the lead is in the South hand, the ♠K J are in the North hand. Oops!)

With such combinations it is essential that we play such "tangled" suits first; in other words – do not play the "easy" suit (Diamonds) before the tangled suit (Spades).

East-West proceed to cash the first four Club tricks Before they run out of steam. Had they been able to take five Club tricks we'd have been defeated before we got started. It happens.

As the enemy take their Clubs we have to make two discards from the table and the most useless cards to pitch are the two low Hearts.

West now switches to a Heart, forcing out our ♥A. Our first play is to cash the ♠A Q and, having to abandon Spades for a trick, we cross to the table with a Diamond to cash the ♠K J. Now we take the remaining Diamonds and we have made the contract. Bingo!



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VB01 #2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

West ♠ KT8 ♥ J9852 ♦ 8 ♣ A873		East ♠ A962 ♥ T7 ♦ 7643 ♣ KT9
North ♠ Q5 ♥ A64 ♦ QJT952 ♣ Q5		
South ♠ J743 ♥ KQ3 ♦ AK ♣ J642		

Here we have been dealt another suit where nature has decreed that we cannot immediately take what is rightfully ours.

This layout means that we have to think carefully about the play to trick one as it is vital to keep links between the closed hand and dummy.

West	North	East	South
P	P	P	1NT
P	2NT	P	3NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ 5

Bidding.

We open 1NT in fourth seat (14 points and a 4-4-3-2 shape) and partner raises you to 2NT. With a maximum for our opening bid (we promised 12 to 14), we are entitled to advance to game. So the auction is an *invitational* sequence of 1NT – 2NT – 3NT

Play.

West leads the time-honoured fourth-highest-of-his-longest-and-strongest, to wit: the ♥5. Dummy is slightly surprising in that it contains a six-card suit. Still, a 6-3-2-2 shape has little chance of making 5♦ and North thinks, not unreasonably, that his Diamonds will provide a useful source of tricks in No-trumps.

Our **Count** and **Plan** begins and we should see enough tricks for the contract (three Hearts and six Diamonds). Good enough for a "grabbit and run".

Before we get ahead of ourselves though, let's take a closer look at those Diamonds. They are tangled up good and proper.

There might be six tricks there but the suit cannot be run off at one go. We take the ♦A K and then the lead is with South (the closed hand) and leering at you in the dummy are the winning ♦Q J 10 9. Is this a problem? Well, maybe... We need a way of getting over there, to the table, to make the Diamonds – we don't want them stranded like Robinson Crusoe on a desert island.

The **only** way of placing the lead in the North hand is with Hearts – the ♥A. **Now** we ask ourselves the following question: "Where should I win trick one?" We have a choice of the ♥A on table or the ♥K Q in hand. Can you see that taking the ♥A at trick one would be disaster? Goodbye Mr Crusoe, (also known as the ♦Q J 10 9).

We simply **must** win trick one in hand, preserving the ♥A as later access to the Diamonds. Having taken this necessary precaution we cash the ♦A K next (untangling the suit or, if you prefer the technical jargon,

unblocking the suit) then the path is clear. We cross to the ♥A, cash the Diamonds and finally take our ninth trick with the ♥K.

This topic will be revisited later when we talk about *entries*. Being in the right hand at the right time is a crucial part of success at this game.