



General Hands for Issue 4 of VBlue, year 2. ACOL version

Eight General Hands (ACOL) New VB #4Y2	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

<p>West</p> <p>♠ QJT93</p> <p>♥ A92</p> <p>♦ 87</p> <p>♣ JT5</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ 87</p> <p>♥ 754</p> <p>♦ JT952</p> <p>♣ A97</p>
<p>North</p> <p>♠ A4</p> <p>♥ KJ863</p> <p>♦ 43</p> <p>♣ K643</p>		
<p>South</p> <p>♠ K652</p> <p>♥ QT</p> <p>♦ AKQ6</p> <p>♣ Q82</p>		

Here are eight general practice hands. There is no particular theme to them.

On this deal, you reach a good normal game contract. The play needs a little thought and many would fail without pausing to **count & plan** before rushing to **execute**.

It's a simple matter of planning your entries correctly.

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

Lead: ♠ Q

You reach 3NT after opening 1♠ (normal in Standard English to bid the major suit first with 4-4 in Spades and Diamonds) and receiving a 2♥ response. West surprises you by leading your suit - sh he clearly has long and strong Spades.

You can count five top tricks (three Diamonds and two Spades) and see that Hearts offer three or four extra tricks depending on the distribution. It looks like knocking out the ♥A is the way to go but before starting to play the hand you ask yourself what could go wrong.

If the ♠A is on your right it will be over dummy's ♠K and the ♠A is your only entry to the long Hearts once you have set them up. Having thought it through you should realise the need to play low in dummy to the first trick and preserve the ♠A as an entry. Also, you may need some luck in Hearts in order to set the suit up.

This is the play: The ♠Q lead is the top-of-a-sequence and you play low to preserve the vital entry to dummy. Winning in hand with the ♠K you should immediately start to knock out the ♥A by leading the ♥Q. When that holds you play the ♥10 and are relieved to see the ♥9 appear. This makes it safe to overtake the ♥10 with the ♥J (you were probably going to do that anyway) to be in the right hand to continue with Hearts.

The defence win the third round of Hearts and continue to attack Spades, forcing out the ♠A in dummy. Now you can see enough tricks for the contract. As the cards lie you could play a Club to set up a trick there but that would be dangerous - if the opponent with long Spades could gain the lead he would defeat you.

It is best just to cash out your top tricks (the remaining Hearts and the top Diamonds) to make the contract.

Success on this hand depends on thinking ahead and spotting the need to play low from dummy at trick one thereby preserving the ♠A as a vital entry to dummy's top Hearts.



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Eight General Hands (ACOL) New VB #4Y2	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

<p>West</p> <p>♠ T5</p> <p>♥ QJ84</p> <p>♦ Q52</p> <p>♣ QJT9</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ J982</p> <p>♥ K2</p> <p>♦ JT743</p> <p>♣ 53</p>
<p>North</p> <p>♠ A7643</p> <p>♥ T97</p> <p>♦ A</p> <p>♣ A764</p>		
<p>South</p> <p>♠ KQ</p> <p>♥ A653</p> <p>♦ K986</p> <p>♣ K82</p>		

This is another deal where tyou have to untangle your tricks.

Straightforward? Maybe, maybe not.

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

Lead: ♣ Q

You arrive eventually in 3NT and West leads the ♣Q, presumably from the top-of-a-sequence.

You can count eight top tricks (three Spades, one Heart, two Diamonds and two Clubs) and therefore need to find one more. You have seven Spades between the closed hand and dummy - including the top three honours. If the defenders have three each you will make five Spade tricks. Even if one defender has four Spades you can surrender the fourth round of Spades and set up your fifth Spade as your ninth winner.

You need to be careful because you only have two entries to dummy (you cannot afford to *overtake* the ♠K or ♠Q) so you should play low from dummy on the first trick allowing you time to **unblock** the Spades before crossing to dummy.

This then is the play: you must win the first trick in hand with the ♣K and unblock the Spades by cashing your ♠K Q. Now you cross to dummy with the ♦A and continue playing Spades. When your left hand opponent shows out on the third round of Spades it doesn't deter you because your plan allowed for this. Four Spade tricks will be enough to make your contract so you surrender the fourth round of Spades in order to win the fifth.

You immediately regain the lead with the ♣A and head for home by cashing your last Spade, your ♥A and your ♦K.

Success on this hand comes from careful planning including needing to unblock the Spades before entering dummy and careful counting as you execute your plan.



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Eight General Hands (ACOL) New VB #4Y2	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

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

Lead: ♣ Q

You have an obvious opening bid of 2NT and partner can easily raise that to 3NT

You get the ♣Q lead which must be the top-of-a-sequence and can count five top tricks (two spades, one heart and two clubs). Diamonds will give you the four extra tricks you need once you have knocked out the ♦A, provided you can reach them (if you play the ♣K on the first trick and the defence then refuse to play the ♦A on the first round of Diamonds you won't be able to get to the table).

Avoiding the small trap of taking the ♣K at trick one you must win the ♣A in hand and immediately set about Diamonds by leading the ♦K. When that wins you play the ♦J.

Ducking that on table would be poor play as you'd have no entry (the ♦J would be allowed to win and then what?). The fortunate fall of West's ♦9 8 has suddenly promoted the ♦7 on table so you are quite able to overtake the ♦J with the Queen to set up the suit. East realises it's futile ducking any more Diamonds so he takes his ♦A and tries his luck with a Heart switch.

You have nine top tricks now but it is quite safe to try the Heart finesse for an overtrick as you have control of all suits. No luck today, though, as West takes his ♥K and reverts to Clubs. You now cash out the long Diamonds and the high cards in your hand and have nine tricks for your contract.

West	North	East
♠ 865	♠ J74	♠ QT93
♥ KJ4	♥ 752	♥ T986
♦ 98	♦ QT743	♦ A652
♣ QJT87	♣ K5	♣ 9

South
♠ AK2
♥ AQ3
♦ KJ
♣ A6432

You are about to play in another game contract. Remember, though, that good hands facing weak ones often have problems with **entries**.



General Hands for Issue 4 of VBlue, year 2. ACOL version

Eight General Hands (ACOL) New VB #4Y2	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

West ♠ Q76 ♥ 632 ♦ JT ♣ KQJ32		East ♠ J984 ♥ QJT9 ♦ Q987 ♣ 4
North ♠ AK5 ♥ K754 ♦ K654 ♣ A8		
South ♠ T32 ♥ A8 ♦ A32 ♣ T9765		

Here you play in 3NT and West has what looks to him like a good lead to make. What can you do to create extra tricks from this deal?

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

Lead: ♣ K

You end up in 3NT after an invitational sequence and the ♣K looks like being a good lead to West.

You can count seven top tricks (two Spades, two Hearts, two Diamonds and the ♣A) which is two short of your contract and none of the obvious suits provide much hope of the extras you need.

It would be easy to overlook Clubs as your source of extras since the defence have just led them, but that would be a oversight. With your ♣10 9 8 7 6 5 you have six of the top remaining eight Clubs and knocking out the remaining ♣Q J will leave you with the two extra winners you need.

Taking advantage of your good fortune (a lead in any other suit would give you little chance of fulfilling your contract) you win the ♣A and immediately play one back, remembering to overtake the ♣8 with the ♣9.

West takes that to switch to Diamonds but you are one step ahead in the race. You take the ♦A in hand and mercilessly continue with the Club attack, forcing out the ♣Q. You are now in a position to claim - you have three Club tricks, and two tricks in the other suits. The ♥A, of course, remains as an entry to the closed hand to cash the Clubs.

West was desperately unlucky with his opening lead. It was devastating only in that it devastated his own hand. The world and his wife would lead the ♣K against that bidding but the fact remains that it is the only lead to give you the contract. Bridge can be a tough game sometimes.



General Hands for Issue 4 of VBlue, year 2. ACOL version

Eight General Hands (ACOL) New VB #4Y2	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

<p>West</p> <p>♠ J952</p> <p>♥ 9</p> <p>♦ 8643</p> <p>♣ A974</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ KT73</p> <p>♥ 84</p> <p>♦ J752</p> <p>♣ QJT</p>
<p>North</p> <p>♠ AQ4</p> <p>♥ K532</p> <p>♦ QT9</p> <p>♣ 832</p>		
<p>South</p> <p>♠ 86</p> <p>♥ AQJT76</p> <p>♦ AK</p> <p>♣ K65</p>		

We have been stressing the need to **plan** before executing and to **count** before **planning**. In other words to "look before you leap".

Here, you are playing in a game contract and have to assess the opening lead. What do you make of it and what do you do about it?

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1♥
P	3♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ 2

You reach in 4♥ after an invitational auction and appear to have plenty to spare. West (you can see now that he has a pretty horrible choice of leads) chooses to kick off with the ♠2.

Well you know the routine: **Count-Plan-Execute**. You should start by attempting to *Read the Lead* and should realise that it signifies a four-card suit headed by an honour (the ♠2 could be a singleton but is that credible, given that East has Passed in second seat? Not really).

However, you can count ten top tricks and this should influence your line of play. In an earlier deal (Hand 3) we had an example of a "safe finesse" - in that case we could take a speculative finesse secure in the knowledge that it would do us no harm should it lose. Here, though, we have to ask: "Is there a risk if we were to try the ♠Q and East were to win the ♠K?"

Well, with 20-20 hindsight and a view of all hands we can see the answer. If East could take his ♠K at trick one then at trick two he'd have the ♠Q on the table at the speed of light (maybe quicker) and your ♠K would be blown away. One down before you start. Ugh.

Reason should prevail. With ten top tricks and an "unsafe finesse" you must take the ♠A. True, you you are giving up the chance of an overtrick if the ♠K is on your left (with the opening leader) but if it is on your right you would be sitting there, gnashing your teeth, watching the defence take the first four tricks. Disaster is painful and best avoided, self-inflicted disaster doubly so.


There are entry problems with the Diamond blockage and the fact that there is only one Heart entry to dummy so you need to tread a careful path. Specifically, you should take the ♠A, cash the ♥A Q (the ♥K needs retaining for a later entry) to draw trumps, unblock the ♦A K, cross to dummy with the ♥K and chuck a black card (any low black card) on the ♦Q. Now you can play for an overtrick in complete safety by leading a Club up to your ♣K.

Obviously, that doesn't work here but the defence have only three tricks and you have your game. That's all that matters.



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Eight General Hands (ACOL) New VB #4Y2	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ K542	
	♥ 642	
	♦ A86	
	♣ 875	
West		East
♠ T983		♠
♥ 93		♥ KT87
♦ KQJ9		♦ T7532
♣ Q92		♣ KT64
	South	
	♠ AQJ76	
	♥ AQJ5	
	♦ 4	
	♣ AJ3	

Here, in a trump contract you have the familiar dilemma - do you draw trumps immediately, or not?

If not, what else should you be doing instead?

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♠
P	2♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ K

You reach 4♠ and get the ♦K lead from West, clearly from a sequential holding. Naturally, you take dummy's ♦A and play...?

Well, yet again you must **Count** and **Plan**. You have five Spade tricks, at least two Heart tricks (although you may have to lose to the ♥K *en route*) and two Aces. That's nine tricks so you need a tenth trick from somewhere. The Heart finesse might do it, a 3-3 Heart break might do it and finally, you could ruff your last Heart on table having cleared trumps.

Now, what to do at trick two? Without doubt the worst play is to ruff a Diamond in hand. **Don't ruff in the long trump hand!** All you would do by this ill-starred manoeuvre would be to shorten your trumps and weaken your hand.

Should you draw trumps then? Well, it may look tempting but you have higher priorities. The Heart finesse needs taking sometime or another and entries to table are thin on the ground. The best play is to try your luck in Hearts at trick two and see what happens. On this layout of the cards the finesse wins so things look bright. The clouds roll in again when trumps are 4-0 (ruffing the last Heart in dummy now looks a remote possibility) but you still have ten tricks.

Best play is to draw all the trumps, making sure you finish on the table with the ♠K. Now you take the Heart finesse again and you find yourself with the requisite ten tricks (five Spades, *three* Hearts and two minor suit Aces).

When Hearts prove to be 4-2 you have three losers - but that is all.



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Eight General Hands (ACOL) New VB #4Y2	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

North		East	
♠ K94		♠ AT763	
♥ QJ4		♥ 653	
♦ Q54		♦ 73	
♣ AQ92		♣ 743	
West		South	
♠ QJ5		♠ 82	
♥ K82		♥ AT97	
♦ T982		♦ AKJ6	
♣ K86		♣ JT5	

On this deal you have two lines of play to choose from. One is safe, one is certainly not.

Make sure you choose the safe option.

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

Lead: ♦ T

You arrive in 3NT after a simple and rapid auction. West leads his long suit, which doesn't hurt you a bit. We can all see now that the ♠Q lead would beat 3NT but we are all better players with 20-20 hindsight. West had no reason to try anything other than the ♦10 as his opening shot and now you have to decide what to do.

Pausing to **Count** and **Plan** (you may just have heard this advice before) you should be able to see six top tricks (four Diamonds and two Aces) and either the Heart or the Club finesse will bring you three extra tricks if it works.

You are, however, wide-open in Spades if the lead comes from your left (from the West hand). Therefore you must choose to take the **Club** finesse because if that does lose it will leave your right-hand opponent on-lead and the ♠K protected from attack.

If you were to take the Heart finesse instead West might take the ♥K and, if in form, make the devastating switch to the ♠Q.


So you win the Diamond lead in hand and run the ♠J. When it wins you can repeat the finesse twice more to pick up four Club tricks and your contract. If you think of taking the Heart finesse we can only accuse you of greed. West would win and defeat you, despite you having nine top tricks. Not good thinking.

Note that if East were to turn up with the ♣K you'd have to take the Heart finesse. If that failed you'd have to hope that either West had the ♠A or that West failed to lead a Spade. If the ♥K lay with West and the other key cards (the ♣K and the ♠A) with East then you could count yourself pretty unlucky.



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Eight General Hands (ACOL) New VB #4Y2	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North	
♠ 954	
♥ K3	
♦ Q972	
♣ 9742	
West	East
♠ JT7	♠ Q862
♥ AT862	♥ J95
♦ 5	♦ K643
♣ Q865	♣ JT
	
South	
♠ AK3	
♥ Q74	
♦ AJT8	
♣ AK3	

This deal is about suit management and careful timing.

Good luck.

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

Lead: ♥ 6

You arrive in 3NT having opened 2NT and West leads the fourth-highest-of-his-longest-and-strongest, to wit: the ♥6.

Dummy is no better or worse than you have any right to expect and you can tell that this is going to be tight.

Your initial **Count** and **Plan** isn't too promising. You have one Heart trick, two Spades, three Diamonds (can you make four?) and two Clubs. Not good - five top tricks only and some work to do to develop the extra tricks in the red suits.

The first play is to try dummy's ♥K at trick one. Firstly, you need the entry to dummy (you need to play Diamonds from the table) and secondly, if it wins, the ♥Q is retained and makes it awkward for West to get his suit going.

Having won trick one in the North hand you now need to play the Diamonds for as many tricks as possible. You have to take care, though. Running the ♦Q might work but you may end up in the wrong hand (the ♦Q holds, you play a Diamond to the ♦10 and then what? Dummy is bereft of entries).

You can get away with leading the ♦Q but only if you remember to chuck the ♦10 on it. Now you can lead the ♦9 and underplay it with the ♦8. You are still on table and can lead a third Diamond for the third finesse.

Slightly neater (and what we have done here) is to lead the ♦9 and run it on the first round of Diamonds. The second Diamond lead is the ♦Q and - as before - the lead is always where we want it: on the table.

Since the Diamond finesse is right we have four Diamond tricks and sufficient overall for the contract. In total that's two Spades, one Heart, four Diamonds and two Clubs.