




Eight General Hands. ACOL version. Updated winter 2015/6

VB#13 Y1 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 2H
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ QT742	
	♥ 94	
	♦ 32	
	♣ KQ84	
West		East
♠ KJ93		♠ A6
♥ K86		♥ 532
♦ QT		♦ J9765
♣ JT97		♣ A62
	South	
	♠ 85	
	♥ AQJT7	
	♦ AK84	
	♣ 53	

Here are eight general practice hands on the themes that we have been looking at in VuBridge. They are in no particular order, just enjoy them as they come...

Here, on Hand 1, we begin with an auction that contains simple bidding. Not that the ensuing contract is all that good, mind...

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1♥
P	1♠	P	2♦
P	2♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♣ J

Bidding.

We open 1♥ in third seat followed by a 2♦ rebid over partner's 1♠ response. This 2♦ rebid promises an unbalanced hand although the strength is undefined as yet. The most common pattern is 5-4 in Hearts and Diamonds but 5-5, 6-4 or even 6-5 is possible.

North, with no fit with our suits and not much in the way of values, gives preference back to Hearts with a 2♥ bid, suggesting a weak hand and a desire to shut down the auction. Taking the hint, we Pass 2♥ and there is no further bidding.

Play.

West leads the ♣J and we can see North's point. Both of us are 5-4-2-2 but there is no decent trump fit. Maybe 1NT is the best contract but we can hardly rewind the auction. It would be impossible to arrange to play this deal at the one-level.

In practice we just have to play in a 5-2 fit. 2♥ may be an unappetising contract from North's point of view but there just *ain't no better 'ole to lie in*.

Anyway, there are six losers in sight. Three losers are certain in the black suits and there are slow losers in Hearts and Diamonds (one Heart and two Diamonds).

The one and only saving grace we have on this hand is dummy's doubleton Diamond. With this we can aim to cash our ♦A K and plan to ruff one (or hopefully two) Diamonds on table.

After a Club honour forces the ♣A at trick one, East is alert to our Plan and switches to a trump. Good (if irritating!) defence. Although this trump switch has negated the possibility of ruffing two Diamonds in dummy we must make sure to take our ♥A to assure ourselves of one Diamond ruff. And one Diamond ruff is all we need as that reduces our six losers down to five.

If we do not take our ♥A immediately West would be able to take his ♥K and fire back another Heart, taking away both of dummy's trumps. Now we'd be back up to six losers. So we take the Ace of trumps and hasten to ruff a Diamond on table.

After cashing the ♦A K and playing a third Diamond we can see that West is also out of Diamonds. However, he is in a cleft stick. Should he discard we could simply collect our Diamond ruff. If, on the other hand, he were to ruff with his ♥K (and lead another trump) we'd still have it easy. He'd just be promoting all of our trumps into winning rank. Heads he loses, tails we win.

With no winning option West discards a Spade and we take the Diamond ruff in dummy.


Eight tricks come from five Hearts (that's four in hand and one ruff on table), two top Diamonds and an established Club.



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Y1 VBlue #13 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ AT	
	♥ JT532	
	♦ 52	
	♣ QT85	
West		East
♠ 92		♠ K653
♥ A74		♥ KQ6
♦ KQT93		♦ J64
♣ A94		♣ KJ2
	South	
	♠ QJ874	
	♥ 98	
	♦ A87	
	♣ 763	

If you can see the right defence you must seize the opportunity and take control of the situation.

Is that the case here?

Well, what do you think?

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

Lead: ♠ 7

Bidding.

Sweeping along the super-highway, East-West bid 1NT – 3NT.

Routine stuff when holding two balanced hands with a combined 26 points.

Play.

This deal needs defensive care and attention. We lead the ♠7 against 3NT (our fourth-best Spade) and are charmed when partner takes the ♠A and returns the ♠10.

Dummy's Diamonds are threatening as a source of tricks; this means that we must set up our Spade suit before declarer can get his suit set up. This is a classic *tempo hand*. We must get our Spade tricks going before declarer gets his Diamond tricks established.

After partner returns the ♠10 at trick two we see that it is winning the trick as declarer (reluctant to part with his master ♠K) plays a low Spade. The question is, should we allow partner's ♠10 to hold the trick?

The answer, of course, is a flat-out **no!** The reason is that we can see the ♠9 in plain sight on the table. Couple that with partner's ♠10 and our ♠Q J 8, this has essentially 'internally solidified' our Spade suit.

This means that we should rise to the occasion and take control of the defence. We must overtake partner's ♠10 with one of our honours and continue with a top Spade.

If partner's ♠10 were allowed to hold the trick he would be forced to switch to another suit as he is out of Spades. This would hand the tempo over to declarer who could win the switch (a Club? a Heart?) and force out our ♦A while he still had the ♠K intact.

Please observe that if partner had started off with ♠A 10 × then it wouldn't matter a jot whether we overtook partner's ♠10 return or not. However, it must be best to take charge and overtake partner's ♠10 just in case the Spades are distributed as in the actual layout.


[Note: Had the ♠9 not been in dummy then it would have been a little too dangerous to overtake the ♠10. In this case our Spade suit would not be 'solidified' and East would have started with ♠K 9 5 3].



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Eight General Hands. ACOL version. Updated winter 2015/6

Y1 VBlue #13 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 45
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ Q53	
	♥ 7	
	♦ 8752	
	♣ KJ632	
West		East
♠ 82		♠ 976
♥ QJT95		♥ A83
♦ QT4		♦ J93
♣ AT8		♣ Q974
	South	
	♠ AKJT4	
	♥ K642	
	♦ AK6	
	♣ 5	

There is a clear indicator on this deal that should show the way for you to play this hand.

Can you identify that indicator?

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

Lead: ♥ Q

Bidding.

We open 1♠ and, to our delight, partner supports Spades by making a simple raise to 2♠.

This shows 6-9 points with trump support. Holding an 18 count with a 5·4·3·1 shape we should jump directly to 4♠ without a moment's hesitation.

Play.

West leads the ♥Q against 4♠. It is slightly disappointing to see dummy hit the deck with only three trumps and wasted values in Clubs but that's life. 2♠ is certainly the correct response on North's cards. What else? 1NT? That's utterly repulsive. Go and sit on the naughty step!

To the play... There is a clear indicator on this deal that points us in the right direction in how to tackle the play – and that indicator is, of course, the singleton Heart in dummy.

In terms of losers, we have a Club, a Diamond, and possibly three Hearts (not four, since the opening Heart lead sets up our ♥K). Thanks to the singleton Heart in dummy our plan on this hand is to ruff Hearts on table.

East takes his ♥A at trick one, and not surprisingly, switches to a trump. Good defence – and the right way to play against a dummy like this one. The danger (from East's perspective) is Heart ruffs on table and leading trumps may hinder that plan. As it happens, this worthy defence does not hamper us much since we only need to ruff two Hearts on table (our ♥K is good, remember). So, a case of **nice try, no cigar**.

We should take care to win the trump switch in hand, ruff a small Heart (no need to release the ♥K just yet), come back to hand with a top Diamond and ruff the last small Heart.

We finally return to the closed hand with another top Diamond to draw trumps and we are able to claim our contract, losing one Heart,


one Diamond, and one Club. Put another way, we make seven Spades (five in hand and two ruffs on table), one Heart and two Diamonds.



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Y1 VBlue #13 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ AKQ5		
	♥ AJ42		
	♦ A742		
	♣ J		
West		East	
♠ 982		♠ JT4	
♥ KT		♥ Q9875	
♦ QJT93		♦ 8	
♣ 982		♣ A764	
	South		
	♠ 763		
	♥ 63		
	♦ K65		
	♣ KQT53		

Following the essential principle of **Count** and **Plan** should see you home on this deal.

Of course, that's what you should be doing on every deal but it can't hurt to emphasise it.

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

Lead: ♦ Q

Bidding.

These 4-4-4-1 hands are something of a nightmare. The textbooks suggest that we open 1♥ with a singleton Club so partner does precisely that. We are under strength to reply 2♣, so we try 1NT.

Partner, knowing that with a four-card Spade suit we would have responded 1♠, raises to 3NT, not quite sure how useful his 19 points (including a singleton Jack) will be. At least he knows that the partnership has 25+ points between us.

Play.

West leads the ♦Q and we start off by counting our top tricks. On this hand, we have six "toppers" (three Spades, one Heart and two Diamonds) meaning we must hope to establish three "extras".

Those extra tricks certainly won't be coming from Hearts or Diamonds, so they must come from Spades and Clubs.

Clubs is our main source of tricks, but the question is, *how many Club tricks can we establish?*

Conventional wisdom tells us that we should first play the honour(s) from the short side, but we can see a problem here if we let dummy's ♣J ride – the opponents will surely withhold the ♣A and we'd need two entries to our hand...

1. to establish the Club suit, and

2. to cash the long Clubs.

Unfortunately there is only one side entry to the closed hand and that is the ♦K. This suggests that we should revise our plan by overtaking dummy's ♣J with a top Club honour so we can keep persisting with the Clubs. How many Club tricks will that give us though?

If our Clubs were headed by the ♣K Q 10 9 8, then we'd have four sure Club tricks. Even ♣K Q 10 9 × would give us a good chance of

establishing four Club tricks (we'd need the suit to split 4-3).

Without sufficient supporting intermediate cards we can only hope to establish **two** Club tricks. Yes, this means that we will need the ninth trick to come from Spades, and that means we have to hope for a 3-3 Spade break.

With this plan in mind we must take care to win the opening Diamond lead in dummy to preserve our King as a later entry. At trick two we play dummy's ♣J and, when East follows low, we overtake with a top Club. When that holds we continue with another top Club, driving out the Ace.


This establishes two Club tricks and, as long as we remember not to pitch dummy's ♠5 on our Club winners, the 3-3 Spade split sees us home.

Nine tricks come from four Spades, one Heart, two Diamonds and two Clubs.



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Y1 VBlue #13 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 852	
	♥ A53	
	♦ 9854	
	♣ A75	
West		East
♠ Q973		♠ JT
♥ 876		♥ 92
♦ KQT		♦ AJ72
♣ 963		♣ QT842
	South	
	♠ AK64	
	♥ KQJT4	
	♦ 63	
	♣ KJ	

The right play on this deal may not be as intuitive as it seems.

Get your thinking cap on as you may need to explore different lines of play.

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1♥
P	1NT	P	2NT
P	3♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ K

Bidding.

We open 1♥ after two Passes and partner responds 1NT, the *catchall response*. With 17 points we are too strong to give up on game so we choose to raise to 2NT. Note that it is pointless bidding Spades as North has denied holding four of them.

North now has an awkward bid. Near-maximum for a 1NT response he has two Aces and few intermediate cards – values that argue for playing in a suit rather than in No-trumps.

He therefore makes the intelligent bid of 3♥, showing delayed support. Holding a *semi-balanced* hand (5·4·2·2) we go on to 4♥ rather than 3NT. Note that Pass is not an option.

Play.

West chooses to lead the ♦K against 4♥ and follows it with two further rounds of Diamonds. We ruff the third Diamond and take stock. With two Diamonds lost and two more potential losers in Spades, the goal on this hand is to play the Spades for just one loser.

We might be used to a 4-3 side-suit fit from experience in No-trumps, knowing that a 3-3 break in the suit would allow the establishment of the fourth card in the suit. There is a better line available on this hand – and that is to ruff the fourth Spade in dummy.

Although there is no "short" suit in dummy, the best bet on this hand is to play off the ♠A K and a third round of Spades. If Spades split 3-3 all well and good but if they split 4-2 it would not be a problem as we could ruff the fourth Spade with the almighty ♥A.

As usual with *ruff in the dummy* hands it is the wrong play to draw trumps. We need to keep those Hearts on table – especially the ♥A. So we play off the ♠A K at tricks four and five and then concede a Spade. West continues with the ♠Q, forlornly hoping that East would be able to over-ruff the dummy.


Well, nothing over-ruffs the Ace of trumps. We call for the ♥A, draw the remaining trumps and have the ♣A K at the end. Our ten tricks come from two Spades, **six** Hearts and two Clubs.

Note once again that the essential extra trick comes from *ruffing in the short trump hand*. Little would be gained from ruffing a Club in hand.



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Y1 VBlue #13 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3S
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ QJT3		
	♥ J752		
	♦ A73		
	♣ QJ		
West		East	
♠ 982		♠ 4	
♥ K4		♥ AQT	
♦ JT96		♦ 8542	
♣ AT73		♣ K9852	
	South		
	♠ AK765		
	♥ 9863		
	♦ KQ		
	♣ 64		

What at first appears to be a hopeless contract on this deal may turn out differently.

Can you take advantage of an unfortunate opening lead?

It's good to be lucky once in a while.

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

Lead: ♦ J

Bidding.

East Passes as dealer and we open 1♠. This is raised to 3♠ by partner, indicating an invitational hand (about 10 to 11 points) with four-card Spade support. With a flat shape (well, 5-4-2-2) and a rock-bottom minimum hand we Pass the auction out.

(If you don't Pass after 1♠ – 3♠ on this minimum South hand, with its plethora of Heart and Club losers, just what hand would you Pass 3♠ on?)

Play.

At first glance, looking at both hands, we can see that there are five quick losers off the top – two Hearts and three Clubs.

However, making an opening lead is not the easiest job in the world and, unfortunately for him, West decides to lead from the top of a sequence, the ♦J. That is a perfectly reasonable thing to do – in fact, most rational players would select a Diamond as the opening shot. A Club or Heart lead would be wild speculation on West's part.

The ♦J lead gives us the *tempo* and we must seize upon it. We take the ♦Q, draw one round of trumps, unblock the ♦K and draw the remaining trumps ending in dummy. (A 4-0 split would make life awkward, but here we are not unsettled by the actual 3-1 break). Now, crucially, we are in a position to cash that ♦A in order to dump a loser.

When discarding on the ♦A, we must remember to discard a Club and **not** a Heart. If we discard a Heart we'd still have three Heart losers anyway. Better is to discard a Club (a sure loser) and plan to set up a slow (a very slow!) Heart winner.


With the 3-2 Heart split, the opponents are held to one Club and three Hearts.



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Y1 VBlue #13 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 7	
	♥ KQ84	
	♦ T6	
	♣ KT7542	
West		East
♠ JT3		♠ A842
♥ 7653		♥ 9
♦ AJ974		♦ KQ832
♣ J		♣ 986
	South	
	♠ KQ965	
	♥ AJT2	
	♦ 5	
	♣ AQ3	

On this deal, you will be faced with a couple of choices.

As ever, it is up to you to determine which play is the right one.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
P	1NT	P	2♥
P	3♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ J

Bidding.

Our 1♠ opening bid fetches a 1NT response from partner, showing 6 to 9 points. With only 8 points (and a singleton in our suit) he is not strong enough to venture 2♣.

No matter, we rebid 2♥ to show our Hearts and partner certainly has enough to raise our second suit. With a better hand (16 points) than our bidding to date has shown we are delighted to advance to game.

Play.

West leads his singleton ♣J against 4♥ and we are delighted at the sight of dummy. With such lovely Clubs and a singleton Spade there are several options to choose from in terms of how we could tackle this hand.

In fact, dummy's singleton Spade on this deal is a red herring. It may feel intuitive to play to ruff a couple of Spades in dummy but a closer look at this deal suggests that we should not aim to ruff anything on table.

A count of our **winners** determines how we should play this 4♥ contract. Four Heart tricks and six Club tricks adds up to a total of ten winners. When we can see the harbour we should row for home – in this case that means we should draw trumps.

So we win the opening Club lead, draw trumps (four rounds of the suit if trumps are 4-1, as they are here), and enjoy the rest of the Clubs.


Watchpoint! We must take care to win the Club opening lead in our hand so we do not block the Club suit.



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Y1 VBlue #13 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ A952	
	♥ QJ9	
	♦ KQ32	
	♣ JT	
West		East
♠ JT4		♠ 8
♥ AKT64		♥ 85
♦ J96		♦ T74
♣ 84		♣ KQ96532
	South	
	♠ KQ763	
	♥ 732	
	♦ A85	
	♣ A7	

Careful counting on this deal may well be the key to success.

Have we ever mentioned **counting** before?

West	North	East	South
P	1NT	P	3♠
P	4♠	P	P
P			

Lead: ♥ A

Bidding.

After North's opening of 1NT we jump to 3♠ to show game values and a five-card Spade suit.

North, delighted to have four-card trump support, is happy to raise to the Spade game.

Play.

West leads the ♥A, then the ♥K and follows with a third Heart, which East, annoyingly, ruffs before switching to the ♠K.

With three tricks lost and a Club loser staring at us our only hope of making this contract is to collect four Diamond tricks for a Club discard in the closed hand.

After winning the ♠A, we draw three rounds of trumps (East took his Heart ruff with a singleton trump) and take stock. Although the main chance is an even split in Diamonds it costs us nothing to delay playing the suit until the end. If we play off winning trumps who knows? Maybe an obliging opponent will fall asleep and chuck a Diamond.

So we cash the ♠9 (in our rush to pull trumps we blocked the Spade suit. Ho hum), cross back to hand with the ♦A and play off the last trump. On some sunny days, one opponent, with an eye on other matters, may throw a Diamond away and hand us the contract, gift-wrapped with a bow.

Not today. East and West studiously keep Diamonds so we have to hope for a 3-3 break and, luckily, the cards oblige. The last three Diamonds (the ♦K Q 3) on table are all winners and we make ten tricks.

To be precise, we make five Spades, one Club and four Diamonds.